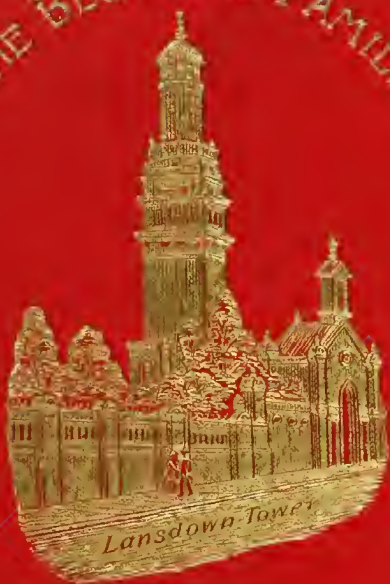


THE BECKFORD FAMILY





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No. .

THE BECKFORD FAMILY.

PRINTED AT
THE "BATH CHRONICLE" OFFICE.
1898.



William Beckford, Esq.^{re}

The Beckford Family.

REMINISCENCES
OF
FONTHILL ABBEY
AND
LANSDOWN TOWER.

COMPILED FROM VARIOUS SOURCES
BY W. GREGORY,

*Author of "Ralph Allen and Prior Park,"
"John Wilkes, a Political Reformer of the Eighteenth
Century," etc.*

"Despise not any man and do not spurn any thing.
For there is no man that hath not his hour, nor is there
any thing that hath not its place."

SECOND EDITION—REVISED AND ENLARGED.

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1898.

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JOHN STONE, ESQ.
Town Clerk for the City of Bath.

TO
JOHN STONE, ESQUIRE,
WHO FOR
THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS HAS FILLED THE
OFFICE OF
TOWN CLERK OF BATH,
WITH HONOUR TO HIMSELF AND
BENEFIT TO THE CITY,
THESE REMINISCENCES
OF THE
BECKFORD FAMILY
ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY
HIS OBEDIENT SERVANT,
WM. GREGORY.

P R E F A C E .

In the preface to the first edition of this work, published some ten years since, the Compiler explained that he did not pretend to much originality of matter. He had simply collected from various sources particulars and reminiscences of the Beckford Family, and given them a coherent whole. His object was to present the chief members of the Family in a different light to that chosen by certain critics, who, he believed, had misunderstood and misrepresented them. Fresh materials having been collected in the interval, these have been incorporated in the present edition, and, with the portraits and illustrations also added, the Compiler hopes that it will be even more acceptable to the public than its predecessor, which was soon out of print. As he will soon enter upon his eighty-second year, this brochure must be received as "the gathering of the last fruit from an old tree."

The thanks of the Compiler are due to Mr. A. F Walbrook, Proprietor of the "Bath Pictorial" for his courtesy in supplying many of the Illustrations used, and also to the Controller of the Guildhall, London, for kindly permitting the London Stereoscopic Company, Cheapside, to photograph the Statue of Alderman Beckford in the building specially for this Work.

W. G.

11, George Street, Bathwick, Jan., 1898.

“Every man has in himself a continent of undiscovered character.”

“Believe not each aspersing mind,
As most weak persons do,
But still believe that story false
That ought not to be true.”

“HONI SOIT QUI MAL Y PENSE.”

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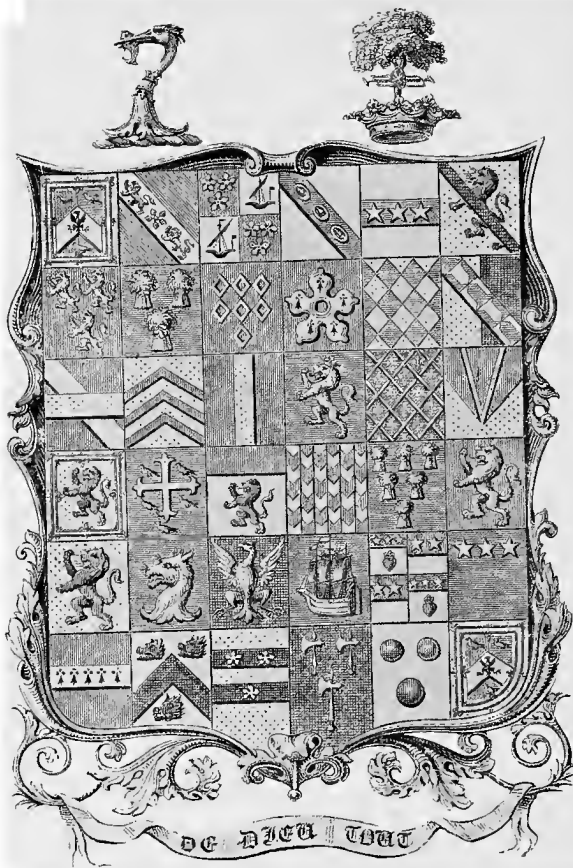
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ARMORIAL BEARINGS OF THE
BECKFORD FAMILY.

THE BECKFORD FAMILY.

CHAPTER I.

GENEALOGICAL—ALDERMAN BECKFORD.

T is not the intention of the compiler to give the Genealogical History of the Beckford family, although it was a subject which must have occasioned great research and exercised much influence over Mr. Beckford's mind. In Britton's History of Fonthill Abbey will be found elaborate genealogical tables of the house extending from the 13th to the early part of the 19th century.

Sir William Beckford appears amongst the principal adherents of Richard III., who attended him to Bosworth Field, and probably shared the fate of his sovereign; as the public records of the succeeding dynasty are silent upon the subject of his attainder.

The consequence of the family, thus eclipsed by the fortunes of war, was destined to be revived under the same powerful agency. The Conquest of Jamaica in 1656, afforded a brilliant opening to enterprise and talent; and among the many gallant persons who availed themselves of

it was Colonel Peter Beckford, who by singular address and ability in the conduct of military and civil affairs soon became the most distinguished of the new colonists. He raised himself during the reign of the restored monarch Charles the Second to the high station of President of the Council ; obtained several important grants, and was at length, by William the Third, appointed Lieutenant-Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Island. He died in 1710 possessed of an immense extent of property.

Peter Beckford, Esq., his eldest son and heir, filled the office of Speaker of the Assembly, and died in 1735, leaving by Bathshua his wife, daughter and co-heir of Julines Hering, Esq., a colonel in the army, a numerous progeny. Peter Beckford, Esq., his eldest son and heir, dying in 1737 unmarried, the inheritance devolved upon his next brother—Wm. Beckford, Esq. This distinguished person, who acquired the estate of Fonthill, was twice Lord Mayor and one of the representatives in Parliament for the City of London. He married Maria, daughter and at length co-heir of the Hon. George Hamilton, M.P. for Wells, second surviving son of James the sixth Earl of Abercorn, and died in 1770, leaving his only son and heir, the late Wm. Beckford, Esq., of Lansdown celebrity, who married Lady Margaret Gordon, only daughter of Charles the Fourth Earl of Aboyne ; he had issue two daughters—1, Margaret Maria Elizabeth,

who married Major-General James Orde, and died in 1818, leaving two daughters; 2, Susanna Euphemia, who married her cousin, Alexander, Duke of Hamilton and Brandon.

Alderman Beckford was a celebrated personage in the early years of George the Third's reign. He was on intimate terms with the Earl of Chatham and other advanced politicians of this time.

The following extract is from the *Court Magazine* for October, 1769:—"September 30th.—Yesterday at 1 o'clock in the afternoon came on the election of two persons to be returned by the Livery to the Court of Aldermen, for the Aldermen to choose one of them to serve the office of Lord Mayor of the City of London for the year ensuing. The Common-Sergeant insisted that Mr. Beckford was ineligible; that according to an old Act of Parliament seven years must elapse between the first and second election. On October 7th a poll was demanded by the citizens. The numbers were: for William Beckford, 1967; for Barlow Trecothick, 1911; for Sir Henry Banks, 676. The decision finally took place by the Court of Aldermen. Mr. Beckford pleaded his age and infirmities, and made many excuses for declining to serve the office of Lord Mayor, but the Livery persisted in their refusal to listen to any excuse. *Mr. Beckford, assist to save your country!* was echoed from every side of the hall. Alderman Beckford said he must have time to consider the matter.—Friday, October 13th.—

Messrs. Townsend and Sawbridge went to the Half Moon Tavern, in Cheapside, where being joined by Mr. Lovell and about fifty of the Livery, they formed a handsome procession of fourteen coaches, preceded by the Sheriffs in their State chariots, to wait on Mr. Beckford at his house in Soho-square, where the gentlemen met with the most polite and cordial reception. Mr. Lovell, in the name of the Livery, in the strongest terms of respect, solicited, with much importunity, that Mr. Beckford would, at this important crisis, serve the office of Lord Mayor for the year ensuing, to which dignity he had been a second time elected. Mr. Beckford yielded to the earnest request; and told them that, notwithstanding his advanced years, with all his attendant infirmities, and giving up of his ease and repose, he would devote himself to the service of the Metropolis, as well as of the nation in general, by accepting the office; and that he would go to Fonthill for eight days to settle his private affairs, that he might give up his whole time to the execution of the important trust reposed in him. Mr. Beckford then withdrew for a short time, and returned with the following letter, which he requested the Sheriffs to present for him to the Lord Mayor:—

‘Soho Square, Oct. 13, 1769,

‘My Lord Mayor,—

‘I cannot resist the importunate request of my fellow citizens; their desires have over-



WILLIAM BECKFORD ESQ

London published at the Art Dealer's Office in 1770 by W. H. C.

ALDERMAN BECKFORD.
Twice Lord Mayor of London.
 Died June 21st, 1770. Aged 63 years.

come resolutions that I once thought were fixed and determined.

‘The feeble efforts of a worn-out man to serve them can never answer their sanguine expectations.

‘I will do my best, and will sacrifice ease and retirement, the chief comforts of old age, to their wishes ; I will accept the office of Lord Mayor.

‘I shall hope for the assistance of your Lordship, and my brethren of the Court of Aldermen. The advantage and good effects of their advice were experienced on many occasions in my late Mayoralty.

‘By your Lordship’s most obedient and
‘Faithful Humble Servant,

WILL. BECKFORD.”

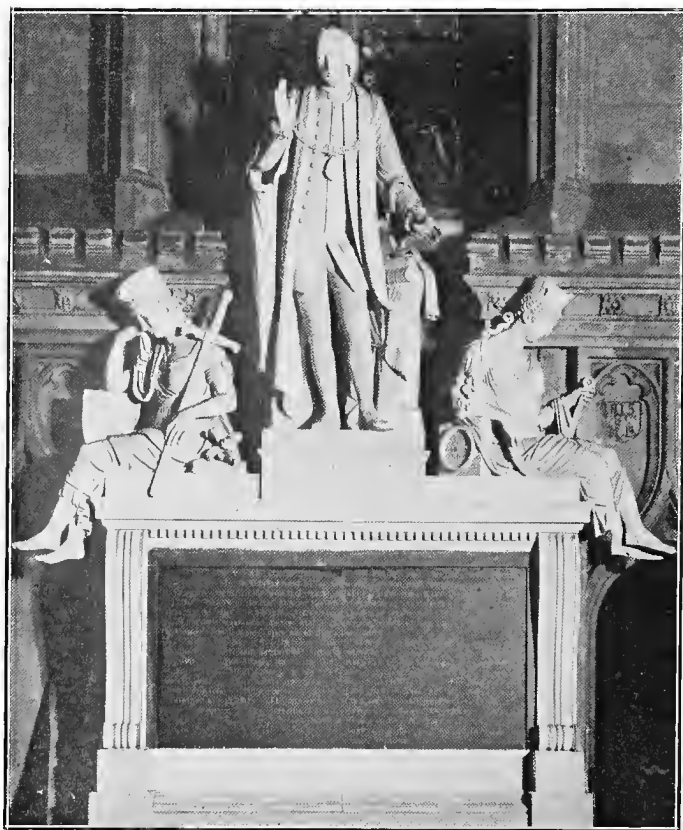
Chatham, as well as Alderman Beckford, was annoyed in consequence of John Wilkes not being allowed to sit as Member for Middlesex, he having polled 1,143 votes against the 296 of his opponent, Colonel Luttrell. He said this arbitrary conduct on the part of the Government was flying in the face of all law and freedom—robbing the freeholders of their liberty and making a mere farce of the birthrights of Englishmen. Lord Mansfield contended that the House had no right to interfere with the decision of the Commons, and that those decisions were strictly legal—that in consequence of previous votes and sentences, Wilkes was nobody in the eye of the

law, and that though the freeholders gave their votes, it was for the House of Commons to judge as to the point of qualification. This, and matters in connection with the American dominions caused great excitement and strong political feeling, and on the 14th of May Lord Denbigh issued written orders to the doorkeepers of the House to admit on no account whatever any person but peers' sons and members of the House of Commons. The pretext was that it was dangerous to increase the popular excitement by the disclosure of their measures and debates, and the stirring harangues of the Opposition. At this time the Earl of Chatham moved, "That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, most dutifully and earnestly beseeching his Majesty that in the dangerous state wherein his kingdoms are involved, from the high dissatisfaction generally prevailing at home, and from the most alarming disorders which have unhappily manifested themselves in his American dominions, his Majesty will, in his great wisdom and necessary care to prevent more fatal mischiefs, be graciously pleased to take the recent and genuine sense of his people, by dissolving this present Parliament, and calling with all convenient dispatch a new Parliament." On the same day the Common Council of London carried a vote of thanks to the orator for the zeal he had shown in support of their most valuable and sacred privileges, the right of election and the

right of petition. On the 19th the King put an end to the Session by prorogation. On the 23rd the Lord Mayor Beckford and some Aldermen, in their formalities, and with a very numerous train, went up once more to St. James's with another petition, complaining of his Majesty's former answer from the throne. His Majesty replied that he should have failed in his duty if he had not expressed his dissatisfaction at their last address ; that his sentiments on that subject continued the same. Upon this Beckford adopted the unpredecended course of asking leave to add a few words from himself ; and his request having been assented to in the confusion of the moment, the bold citizen proceeded to harangue and lecture his Majesty. "What I spoke in the King's presence," said Beckford, reporting the business to Chatham, "was uttered in the language of truth, and with that humility and submission which becomes a subject speaking to his lawful king ; at least I endeavoured to behave properly and decently ; but I am led to believe I was mistaken, for the language of the Court is that my deportment was impudent, insolent, and unprecedented. God forgive them all." It is said that the Lord Mayor was too warm to be polite, and that his tone was much louder than the etiquette of the place allowed. His Majesty showed his anger by issuing, through the medium of the Lord Chamberlain, a positive order that lord mayors should in future confine themselves

to delivering their *papers*, and not presume to deliver speeches. Chatham, on the other side, hastened to applaud Beckford for asserting the rights of the city with weight and spirit. Wilkes, who had contrived to get himself made an alderman, even while he was a prisoner in the Bench, and who was now wearing the civic gown, notwithstanding the charges of sedition, impiety, and blasphemy, did what he could to keep up the storm in the city.

On the 1st of June, 1770, three days after presenting the compliments on the birth of a Princess, Beckford, with a numerous deputation of the Corporation, went down to Hayes and presented the vote of thanks to his friend Chatham. This was the great Lord Mayor's last public performance. On the 15th it was announced that Beckford was in a very alarming state, and on the 21st he died in the 63rd year of his age. His political opponents said the cause of his death was a fever into which his blood was thrown by his late intemperate behaviour ; others from a cold caught by riding from London to Fonthill. His loss was a serious blow to the cause of Opposition, for although the election for a new Mayor fell upon Alderman Trecothick, a steady Whig and an excellent debater, there was no one to furnish the weight of Beckford's wealth and munificence, or to supply his ardour and fearlessness. The city voted that the deceased magistrate should be honoured with a statue in



(Photographed by special permission for this Work).

ALDERMAN BECKFORD'S MONUMENT IN THE
GUILDHALL, LONDON,

Representing him, when Lord Mayor, in the act of addressing
his celebrated speech to King George the Third.

THE CITY OF LONDON
MONUMENT TO ALDERMAN BECKFORD.

The following is a copy of the Inscription on the Monument in the Guildhall as shown on the Illustration opposite :—

WILLIAM BECKFORD, ESQ.,

Twice Lord Mayor,

HIS SPEECH TO HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE THE III.

On the 23d of May, 1770.

MOST GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN.—Will your Majesty be pleased so far to Condescend as to permit the Mayor of your loyal City of London to declare in your Royal Presence, on behalf of his Fellow-Citizens, how much the bare Apprehension of your Majesty's Displeasure would at all times affect their minds. The declaration of that displeasure has already filled them with inexpressible Anxiety and with the deepest Affliction. Permit me, Sire, to assure your Majesty that your Majesty has not in all your Dominions any Subjects more Faithful, more Dutiful, or more Affectionate to your Majesty's Person and Family, or more ready to Sacrifice their lives and fortunes in the maintenance of the true Honour and Dignity of your Crown.

We do, therefore, with the greatest Humility and Submission, most earnestly Supplicate your Majesty that you will not dismiss us from your Presence without expressing a more favourable Opinion of your faithful Citizens and without some Comfort, without some Prospect, at least, of Redress.

Permit me, Sire, further to observe that whoever has already dared, or shall hereafter endeavour by false Insinuations and Suggestions, to alienate your Majesty's Affections from your Loyal Subjects in general, and from the City of London in particular, and to withdraw your Confidence in and Regard for your People, is an enemy to your Majesty's Person and Family, a Violator of the Public Peace, and a Betrayer of our Happy Constitution as it was Established at the Glorious Revolution.

Guildhall, and that the speech he had delivered to the King should be engraved on the pedestal. It represents the Alderman in the act of delivering the following celebrated address, and at the angles are two female figures, Liberty and Commerce, mourning for him :—" Permit me, sire, to observe that whoever has already dared, or shall hereafter endeavour by false insinuations and suggestions to alienate your Majesty's affections from your loyal subjects in general, and from the City of London in particular, and to withdraw your confidence in and regard for your people is an enemy to your Majesty's person and family, a violator of the public peace, and a betrayer of our happy constitution as it was established at the *glorious and necessary Revolution*." Chatham was deeply moved by his death, and continued his affection for his son and heir, then a boy full of promise and of fire, and afterwards distinguished by his splendid living, taste, and literary productions.

LAMENT AT THE DECEASE OF ALDERMAN
BECKFORD.

From the *Political Register* of 1770, Thursday, June 21st :—

" At five o'clock this morning (a day which will be ever mournfully recollected, not only by the citizens of this metropolis, but by the lovers of liberty wherever dispensed) died the Right

Honourable William Beckford, Esq., Lord Mayor of the City of London.

“Most public personages have had some shades in their characters, which the invidious finger of malice has occasionally marked; but in whatever point of view this excellent person may be looked, he rises to our astonishment the perfect, the finished character.

“As a citizen, he was eminently decorated with the virtues of humanity and affability; as a senator, watchful over the rights and liberties of the people; and as a magistrate, unremittingly active in seeing those rights and liberties legally executed. If his lordship's character could want any additional lustre it was the manner of his death, for notwithstanding his having a heavy cold on him (which he acquired by walking in his garden at Fonthill the day before), so attentive was he to discharge the important duty committed to his trust as a chief magistrate of this city that he travelled a hundred miles in one day, which increased his cold to a rheumatic fever, and thereby terminated the life of a man whose character will ever be held in the most honourable and grateful remembrance.

“No man ever left the Mayoralty chair with such universal regret, nor filled it with more honour and dignity; nor did ever a citizen act so disinterestedly for the welfare of the City of London and the rights of Englishmen in general. He lived, the glory of his time, and with an

unshaken intrepidity opposed the wicked machinations of a profligate Minister, and shewed himself the steadfast friend of his King and country, and with firmness and humility. He was the only man of his time who durst tell a king upon his throne, surrounded by his flatterers, the plain and honest truth. Thus, in the sixty-third year of his age and the second of his Mayoralty, he expired with a prayer for the welfare of England, regretted and lamented by every virtuous character in the kingdom."

CHAPTER II.

WILLIAM BECKFORD.

ILLIAM BECKFORD, only son of Alderman Beckford, was born in September, 1760, and succeeded to the vast property of his father, said to be worth a hundred thousand a year, while only ten years of age. He was placed at his father's death under the care of his godfather, the first Earl of Chatham. His education was all that could be required for bringing such faculties as his into the highest state of perfection. He became proficient in the knowledge of the classical languages, and, besides, acquainted himself with five of those of Modern Europe, in three of which he could write like the most refined native. He studied music under Mozart, architecture under Sir Wm. Chambers, and drawing under one of the first artists of his day.

The strong individuality of his future life was shadowed forth by various decided tastes, notably a love of Eastern fiction, so absorbing that by the advice of Lord Chatham the "Arabian

Nights" were hidden from him. Another incident also indicates a favourite study. When he was in his fifteenth year he spent a month with Lord Chatham at Burton Pynsent, in Somersetshire. The evening family parties included the future statesman, William Pitt, then of the same age as William Beckford, and those parties were enlivened by recitations. On one occasion Beckford was asked to recite a speech of considerable length which he had translated from Thucydides and learnt by heart. He obeyed with great readiness, excelled both in action and emphasis, and delighted his venerable host, who laid down his crutch (having then a fit of gout) and embraced him, saying to his son, "May you, my boy, some day make as good a speaker." What his son became all the world knows, how brilliant in the Senate, how commanding in the Cabinet; but it is said of the two youths at this time that while quietness, discernment, and accuracy were with Pitt; genius, imagination, and energy were with Beckford. Fortunately for the young orator he was not always flattered. In the same year he visited his relations, the Duke and Duchess of Queensbury, in Wiltshire. There also he displayed his oratorical powers, but the Duchess—a very stately old lady—thought him deficient in etiquette. Once he failed so lamentably that her Grace rang the bell and ordered the servant to bring the family Bible, where she found a passage applicable to the case, which she

requested him to read, saying, "There it was, young man, that I learnt my manners."

Mrs. Beckford having a prejudice against the English Universities, sent her son for his further education to Geneva. He lived there with her relation, Colonel Hamilton, his studies being still directed by the wise tutor who had been with him from the beginning. In addition to a course of lectures on civil law, mention is made of some lessons in riding and fencing. But the chief good of his residence in Switzerland was in the companionship of a few able and eminent men. He learnt much from Saussure, one of the earliest Alpine explorers, and from Bonnet, the great naturalist. With a literary family named Huber, who were fond of falconry, he contracted a great intimacy. Noteworthy visits of the period were to the Grande Chartreuse, of which he wrote an admirable account, and to the philosopher of Ferney, then in his eightieth year. Voltaire, of whose ghastly, skeleton-like aspect he had the most vivid recollection, he describes as a very dark-complexioned, shrivelled, and thin man, hardly above the middle height. The aged philosopher laid his hand on his head at parting, saying, "I give you the blessing of a very old man." In 1780 he again visited the Continent, and spent a year in rambling through Flanders, Germany, and Italy, and in 1782 he travelled a second time in the latter country.

About this time he printed, but did not publish,

a work which he called "Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents, in a Series of Letters from various parts of Europe." His first published literary effort was a *jeu d'esprit*, entitled "Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters." Having overheard the old housekeeper at Fonthill making the strangest blunders in describing the pictures to visitors, he thought of drawing up a sort of catalogue embodying, or rather exaggerating, her absurdities, and this for the purpose of being used as a guide by strangers, not one of whom had the slightest acquaintance with the names of the real artists. To quote himself, "The book was soon on the tongues of all the domestics." Many were the quotations current upon the merits of Og of Basan and Watersouchy of Amsterdam. Before a picture of Rubens, or Murillo, there was often a charming dissertation upon the pencil of the Herr Sucrewasser of Vienna, or that great Italian artist, Blunderbussiana of Venice. "I used to listen," says Mr. Beckford, "unobserved until I was ready to kill myself with laughing at the authorities quoted to the squires and farmers of Wilts, who took all for gospel."

He was but twenty-two years of age when he composed his wondrous tale of "Vathek" in French. This was written "at one sitting of three nights and two days. I never took off my clothes the whole time," says Mr. Beckford. The beauty of some of the descriptions in this tale

and the dreary grandeur of its close in a hall of everlasting torment, stamp it as a production of the highest genius. It seems strange that one who could write so well should have written no more in the same style. The work was nevertheless little known to the English public till a translation was published in London in 1815. We have the author's own authority that the composition of "Vathek," performed as it was without intervening sleep, and productive as it must have been of extraordinary excitement, made him extremely ill. The style seems formed from that of Voltaire and Count Hamilton ; there are, however, passages in it of a higher order of conception than are found in either. The description of the Hall of Eblis is one of these. On its being said to Beckford that nothing in the Eastern works of fiction was like it, he said that he took it from the hall of Old Fonthill, the largest probably in any private house in England. "It was from that hall I worked, magnifying and colouring it with Eastern character. All the female characters were portraits drawn from the domestic establishment of old Fonthill, their good or evil qualities ideally exaggerated to suit my purpose." "Vathek" was translated into English sometime after its appearance ; Beckford never knew by whom, but he praised the translation. Mr. Beckford was perhaps too much a student to be an active author. He gave himself almost entirely up for years to reading and the cultivation

of his taste for works of art. The effects of years devoted by a powerful mind to constant study were most remarkable. He seemed to be acquainted with all the principal authors that ever wrote, and of his own vast collection of books scarce one but what contained remarks written by him.

At an early period of life Mr. Beckford married Lady Margaret Gordon (whom he first met at a ball in Bath), daughter of the Earl of Aboyne, by whom he was left a widower at twenty-six with two daughters. He formed no other alliance. His wife, Lady Margaret, died at the Château de la Tour just after her confinement. He is said to have vowed he would be faithful to her memory and never marry again, and to have spent hours at this spot dreaming of all that had been lovely to him, and of which he had been deprived. Much of this period of his life was spent in France, with most of whose contemporary great men he became acquainted. Italy, Spain and Portugal also shared in his affections. His observations on these countries were preserved in a series of letters which were published near the end of his life. At Cintra, in Portugal, he for some time established his residence, building in one of the loveliest spots of that beautiful region a fairy palace, the first of his wondrous creations in stone and lime. Byron alludes to this beautiful but now ruined mansion in his "Childe Harold:"

There thou too, Vathek ! England's wealthiest
son,
Once found thy paradise, as not aware
When wanton Wealth her mightiest deeds
hath done,
Meek Peace voluptuous lures was even wont to
shun.

Here didst thou dwell, here schemes of
pleasure plan
Beneath yon mountain's ever beauteous brow :
But now as if a thing unblest by man
Thy fairy dwelling is as lone as thou ;
Here giant weeds a passage scarce allow
To halls deserted, portals gaping wide ;
Fresh lessons to the thinking bosom, how
Vain are the pleasaunces on earth supplied
Swept into wrecks anon by Time's ungentle tide.

During the troubles in the Peninsula Mr. Beckford abandoned his residence at Cintra and returned to England, where he soon applied himself to the business which of all others he most loved, that of building, furnishing, and planting. He was engaged the better part of twenty years in rearing and fitting out his palace at Fonthill. This estate had been purchased by his father. Beckford hearing one day of the conflagration of the old mansion, coolly said, " Well, let it be rebuilt," and this was done at the enormous expense of £240,000. The luxurious " Vathek," dissatisfied with the site, which was low,

determined to abandon it, and rebuild upon one more elevated. When this was effected the costly old mansion was sold for the value of the materials—nine thousand pounds.

Yet it was long regarded as the most attractive and splendid seat in the West of England. It was a handsome, uniform edifice, consisting of a centre of four stories and two wings of two stories, connected by corridors, built of fine stone and adorned with a bold portico, resting on a rustic basement, with two sweeping flights of steps. Its apartments were numerous and splendidly furnished. They displayed the riches and luxury of the East, and on particular occasions were superbly brilliant and dazzling. Whilst its walls were adorned with the most costly works of art, its cabinets presented a gorgeous combination of gold, silver, precious metals, and precious stones, arranged and worked by the most tasteful and skilful artists and artisans. Added to these splendours, these dazzling objects, apparently augmented and multiplied by large and costly mirrors, was a vast, choice and valuable library. The entrance hall was eighty-five feet ten inches in length, thirty-eight feet six inches in breadth. Its roof was vaulted and supported by large stone piers. Splendid, however, as it was, and presenting as it did such fascinations, it was placed in a low, damp, and unhealthy situation on the margin of a broad lake, and at the base of a hill covered

with woods. Dissatisfied with this situation, its proprietor doomed it to destruction, and nearly all its contents were dispersed. Such is a short account of Fonthill-house that belonged to Alderman Beckford.

CHAPTER III.

THE NEW FONTHILL.

HE construction of the new edifice was conducted by the solitary and self-absorbed enthusiast with an energy highly characteristic. Determined to produce an edifice uncommon in design and adorn it with splendour ; knowing and properly appreciating the insatiable curiosity of the English, and that no common means would restrain it from breaking in upon domestic privacy, and encroaching on the regular occupation of artificers and workmen, Mr. Beckford commenced his work by raising a high wall around a track of land above six miles in extent. This was guarded by projecting railings on the top, in a manner of *chevaux de frise*, and thus constituted a sort of fortified barrier. Large and strong gates, or rather double gates, were provided in this wall at the different roads of entrance to the interior. At these gates were stationed persons who had strict and rigid orders not to admit a stranger. The following is the explanation for privacy

given by Mr. Beckford to a literary friend, who was in his confidence, at his residence, in Lansdown Crescent, Bath :—

“ Some persons say that I built the wall before I began the house to cut myself wholly off from mankind. Why, I had always one, sometimes two hundred workmen with me. I built the wall because I would not have my grounds intruded upon by sportsmen. In vain were they warned off. Your country gentlemen will transport a pauper for taking a few twigs from a hedge which *they* will break down without ceremony. They will take no denial, when they go hunting in their red jackets to excruciate to death a poor hare. I found remonstrances vain, so I built the wall to exclude them. I never suffer an animal to be killed but through necessity. Early in life I gave up shooting because I consider we have no right to murder animals for sport. I am fond of animals. The birds of Fonthill seemed to know me—they continued their songs as I rode close to them—the very hares grew bold. It was exactly what I wished.” Resuming, he said, “ A story has been circulated that some one came in over the wall, and mistaking the master for the gardener was shown the grounds, and was at night desired to find his way out as he got in. I will tell you the origin of the story. Vulgar curiosity was so excited by the edifice I was constructing, but more by the falsehoods told of myself, that even ‘ gentlemen ’

disguised themselves in workmen's dresses, and got in to see what was doing. It was not pleasant, being among the workmen continually, to be looked in the face all day long by intrusive people who had no business there. I never refused strangers at proper seasons the satisfaction of their curiosity. The circumstance to which you allude has foundation in fact. I was coming out of the hall, going towards the plantation, when a stranger addressed me—'Can I see Fonthill?' My reply was, 'It is not shown.' 'Might I see the gardens then, *you* can show them, I dare say?' I thought I would follow out the joke, as the stranger was of gentlemanly address. I led him into the gardens, showed him the grounds, and lastly took him into the house. Here I imagined he began to suspect I was not what I pretended. I know not to this day who he was, but I thought him one of the pleasantest men I had ever conversed with, deeply read, sensible, and perfectly well bred. When I had shown him the principal apartments I knew that dinner was serving up. I begged him to walk with me into a room he had not seen, and instantly led the way to the dinner table, telling him of his mistake, of which by this time there was little need. I would take no denial; he dined with me. We conversed on a variety of subjects—he was at home in all. When he rose to go away I rung for a servant as it was dark, thanking him for his society. I asked if

he had any conveyance. He only expressed a wish to be shown the park gate. We parted, and I never saw him more. As to my treating one of the most agreeable strangers I ever saw in my life with rudeness—one who had eaten my salt—it was impossible. I hope I am a gentleman.”

The foundation of the new Fonthill was laid in the year 1795. A vast number of mechanics and labourers were employed to advance the works with rapidity. The neighbouring villages were thronged with inhabitants, and a new village or hamlet was built to accommodate some of the new settlers. “At one time every cart and wagon in the district were pressed into the service, though all the agricultural work of the country stood still. At another even the royal works at St. George’s Chapel, Windsor, were abandoned that four hundred and sixty men might be employed night and day on Fonthill Abbey. These men were made to relieve each other by regular watches; and during the longest and darkest nights of winter the astonished traveller might see the tower rising under their hands, the trowel and torch being associated for that purpose.” This must have had a very extraordinary appearance; and we are told that it was another of those exhibitions which Mr. Beckford was fond of contemplating. He is represented as surveying the work thus expedited, the busy bevy of masons, the high and giddy dancing of the lights, and

the strange effects produced upon the architecture and woods below, from one of the eminences in the walks, and wasting the coldest hours of November and December in feasting his sense with this display of almost superhuman power.

CHAPTER IV.

A FRENCHMAN'S DESCRIPTION.



distinguished Frenchman, Henri Meister, paid two visits to England at the close of the eighteenth century, and published his impressions in a series of entertaining letters. On the second occasion he made the acquaintance of Beckford, who drove him from London to Fonthill, of which he gives a graphic description. The mansion, he says, stands in the middle of a plain of considerable extent, which is surrounded by several hills, the summits of which are some more distant than others, but all of easy ascents. One of these pleasant hills, cloathed with the thickest verdure, commands a wing of the house, and protects it from the westerly winds. The lovely green of the foliage unites with, and sets off in a very agreeable manner, the extreme whiteness of the stone with which this vast edifice is built. The other wing is bounded by a noble river, which winds slowly on, and having traced a number of meanders along the verdant plain, which it

plentifully waters, forms a cluster of little islands covered with the most beautiful shrubs, and is at length lost in a thick forest, through which certain vistas discover the distant prospect of a chain of richly cultivated hills.

You are not fond of descriptions of palaces, and fine houses ; I shall not, therefore, give you any further account of this, though I know nothing of the kind in France of superior grandeur. I shall not say a word of the elegant and rich apartments it contains, nor of the beautiful proportions of the gallery, the saloon, and the eating room ; nor take any notice of the paintings and statues which ornament them. I shall, however, accommodate myself to your taste by remarking that the fire-places have all of them noble jars of the rare old Japan china, filled with all the gayest flowers of the season, which entirely occupy the vacant space. As the weather was very warm we passed great part of the day on the ground floor, in a kind of Egyptian labyrinth, the recesses of which, ingeniously ornamented, contained besides other riches collected from every region of the known world, one of the most curious libraries I ever met with, furnished not only with the best books, but the best editions of those books, and, I may say, the best and rarest copy of those editions.

Towards the close of the day we were attended by carriages drawn by little horses, and driven by young postillions of a suitable size to the

horses. These carriages waited for us at the bottom of the great steps, and seemed to be proper equipages for the Queen of Sylphidia. They conveyed us rapidly along the roads of this maze of hill and wood ; one-while descending with us into a deep valley ; another time, mounting us up high hills from whose tops we descried immense prospects, extending over several counties, and bounded either by the sea or sky. These views were continually changing to a new country, and I thought myself by turns in Switzerland, in France, in England, and in America ; now I fancied I saw a charming landscape by Paul Potter, another time a noble view by Claude Lorraine.

Having traversed a wood most beautifully rustic, our conductors made a stop at a rural gate which opened to us the moment we set foot on ground ; and, in reality, I thought myself introduced into Julia's Elysium. Following a path covered with moss, and bordered with beds of flowers intermixed with clumps of the most delightful shrubs, and of the wild laurel, the verdure of which is so pleasant to the sight, we arrived at a small dome, which served as an entrance to a spacious grotto that had its principal front towards the river. At the end of this grotto which has none of the trifling ornaments of shell-work, but seems constructed by large masses of rock piled together in a picturesque confusion, a fountain throws out its chrystal

streams, which, falling with a gentle murmur into a rustic bason, is conveyed under the rock and mingles with the waters of the river. As air is continually passing through the two domes that serve as entrances, the grotto is as dry as the best ventilated room. To increase our surprise, on entering upon this enchanted scene, we found a table covered with pine apples, grapes, and other refreshments, in gold and china vases, of the most exquisite shapes and workmanship.

At a small distance from this grotto is a large cave, in which nature or art, for it is not easy to discover which, has formed several deep fissures, some having the appearance of cells, and others answering the purposes of baths. The middle of this cavern is entirely open on the top, except that a sort of covering is formed by the shrubs which have planted themselves in the crevices of the rock, and a fine tree that seems to be planted by the hand of a magician in the centre of this retreat, springing out of a bed of violets bordered with green turf.

We entered, in our walk, temples consecrated to various deities. That which is dedicated to Hercules, is built on a small eminence almost disjoined from the other hills. The temple of the Naiad, the guardian of this beautiful valley, is in a secret cavern, ornamented in the Etruscan taste, on the banks of the river with whose stream she waters it. The temple of Jesus Christ is at a distance from the boundary of these

vast domains. But I cannot help telling you, Madam, that these several buildings, without partiality to any one divinity, are greatly neglected. The owner of this spot pays more attention to the remains of an ancient ruined tower, which has two caves of the most romantic appearance ; one of them overgrown with ivy and vine trees, seems to be dedicated to the rites of Bacchus ; the other is more awful and striking in its aspect ; and, as it should seem, intended to celebrate the sublimest mysteries of the institutions and wisdom of Fairy-Land : but whether these mysteries are of a pleasing, or terrific nature, I am not able to inform you.

Here, methinks, you stop me, and desire to know what extraordinary being it is that inhabits the spot I have been attempting to describe. You cannot ask me a question which can puzzle me so greatly to reply to. The shortest answer I could make would be to tell you that it is the mansion of an enchanter. And this, indeed, seems at first to be the best reply that could be made ; but then you would scarcely give credit to it. In the first place, I must needs own I never saw a being possessed of so great a share of wit ; but to wit, none of the Genii, you have ever heard of, have any pretensions. In the next place, no being can be more amiable or intelligent ; and these too are distinctions for which this race is not remarkable, because their power renders these qualities unnecessary. When he touches

the harpsichord, you fancy you hear Piccini, Gluck, or Orpheus himself playing on it. If he expresses himself in our language, he does it with all the genius and glow of Diderot, and the graces of Hamilton. If he writes English, you would suppose it the only language he was acquainted with. When he pleases to be eloquent, he has at command all the rhetorical powers of the English House of Commons, and all the artifice of persuasion which the speakers in your Convention possess. As an actor, Thiemet and d'Albaret have scarcely greater talents. With all these endowments, with all that wealth is able to procure, I can assure you my enchanter is not a happy man. An air of melancholy and regret obscures the splendour which the graces of his person, and the gaiety of his temper throw around him. I know well he has reason to complain of mankind, and I think he has cause of complaint against himself. With the best disposition, and the most uncommon talents, spoiled by the gifts of nature and of fortune, his fancy must necessarily have become early vitiated. Being endowed with great strength and activity of mind, objects were not easily found sufficiently interesting, and his imagination was taxed with forming such as were dissimilar to what fortune had lavishly bestowed, and his most common notions became either terrific or whimsical ; and were it not that his taste was just and refined, they would become

more gloomy and fantastical.—Of the many inconsistencies with which he is charged, I have only remarked two, because they are such as suit least with my taste. The first is, that he suffers flocks of geese and ducks to cackle and quack up and down that fine river, which ought to be occupied solely by swans. The other, that he permits whole tribes of rooks and crows to blacken over the beautiful green lawn, on which are straying the peacocks that seem in waiting to be harnessed to the car of their divinity.

I do not know if my relation of the enchantments I have been under, have wrought any effect upon you, Madam ; but it is high time that you were informed, I have been labouring to give you a description of the magnificent seat of Fonthill, in Wiltshire. Fully to describe all its beauties, it would have been necessary to have invoked the shade of Gessner, or the genius of *Paul and Virginia*, in one of the rural and poetic caves I have before noticed. The owner of this noble estate is Mr. B—, one of the richest individuals in Europe. The immense fortune which he is in possession of is derived from one of his ancestors, who shared the glory of the conquest of Jamaica, which Columbus had made the magazine of all the riches he brought from the new hemisphere he had discovered, whether for the advantage or disadvantage of the human race, I shall not determine. What he possesses in that island only, will, this year produce to



WM. BECKFORD, ESQ.,
When about 25 years of Age.
(From a Painting by Sir Thos. Lawrence.)

him, upwards of one hundred thousand pounds. The land about Fonthill, which is only a small part of what he owns in the adjoining county of Somerset, is laid out entirely in a pleasure-ground, containing from sixteen to eighteen hundred acres. Mr. B. is very sensible that great land-holders like himself are prejudicial to a country, he endeavours, therefore, to compensate for the injury fortune forces him to do, by furnishing constant employment for four or five thousand labourers, who are all in his pay. He is the proprietor of the town of Hindon, which sends two members to Parliament, the choice of which, you undoubtedly guess, is regulated by him. At the last election, one of the members, willing to shew his gratitude for the loud acclamations of the electors, began an eloquent harangue, which was interrupted by one of the electors, who entreated him to spare himself the trouble of returning thanks: "for," added he, "if the *squire* had sent his *great dog* to us, we "should have chosen him, as we have done you."

The mental powers which Mr. B. is possessed of as much exceed, perhaps, all example as does his fortune. Wonderful as his genius appears, it is a question, whether, from indolence, or from whatever other secret cause, he has advanced to the midway of that excellence which nature seems to have designed him to attain: besides, he is not more than three-and-thirty years of age.

CHAPTER V.

VISIT OF LORD NELSON AND LADY HAMILTON.

HE cause of the extraordinary exertion and activity noticed in the previous chapter was the visit of Lord Nelson, with Sir William and Lady Hamilton, Dr. Wolcot (Peter Pindar), etc., to Fonthill. The "Hero of the Nile," as he was then called, and Lady Hamilton, had excited great notoriety; the one by his courage, naval skill, and conquests, and the other by her personal attractions and abilities. Mr. Beckford having invited them, with several other friends, to his splendid seat, first received and then treated them in an extraordinary manner, for the accomplished author of "Vathek" had determined to exemplify by practical illustration some of the theories of that original romance. If he had not five wings to his palace, or "five other palaces, for the particular gratification of each of the senses," he had concentrated within his own walls, and around his mansion, the most delightful blandishments of art, the fascinations of talent, and the choicest luxuries for the palate,

besides the most rare and delicious viands, fruits, and wines, with odoriferous plants, flowers, and essences; some of the first vocal and instrumental performers were engaged, a military band was provided, the Fonthill volunteers were prepared and disciplined, the house was fitted up with increased splendour, and on the 20th of December, 1800, a large cavalcade was introduced to the mansion. In passing through Salisbury Lord Nelson was escorted into and out of that city by the yeomen cavalry, and was presented with the freedom of Sarum by the Mayor and Corporation in their Council-house assembled. The festivities at Fonthill continued for some days, and the company consisted of persons of distinguished talents and qualifications. The Abbey, or monastic, fête on the evening of the 23rd was the most remarkable period of this gala. A procession of carriages, horses, soldiers, etc., moved from the old house to the Abbey in the evening. Flambeaux, torches, and many thousand lamps were distributed on the sides of the roads among the woods; whilst bands of music and files of soldiers were stationed in different places to greet and charm the company as they passed. Everything indeed was provided to steal upon the senses, to dazzle the eye, and to bewilder the fancy. After passing through a long, winding, umbrageous avenue, after hearing the sounds of distant, near and varied instruments, with their reverberations

among the woods and dells, and contemplating the vivid and solemn effects of bright flitting lights and deep shadows, the company was conducted to the Abbey, where a new, impressive, and mystical scene, or succession of scenes, were presented. For an account of this I quote a letter written at this time: "After entering a groined Gothic hall through a double line of soldiers, the parties were received in the great saloon called the cardinal's parlour, furnished with rich tapestries, long curtains of purple damask before the arched windows, ebony tables and chairs studded with ivory of various but antique fashion; the whole room in the noblest style of monastic ornament, and illuminated by lights on silver sconces. At the moment of entrance they sat down at a long table occupying nearly the whole length of the room (fifty-three feet) to a superb dinner, served in one long line of enormous silver dishes, in the substantial costume of the antient Abbeys, unmixed with the refinements of modern cookery. The table and sideboard glittered with piles of plate and a profusion of lights, not to mention a blazing Christmas fire of cedar and the cones of pine, which united to increase the splendour and improve the *coup d'œil* of the room. It is needless to say that the highest satisfaction and good humour prevailed, mingled with sentiments of admiration at the grandeur and originality of the entertainment. Dinner being ended the

company moved upstairs to the other furnished apartments of the Abbey. The staircase was lighted by certain mysterious living figures at different intervals, dressed in hooded gowns and standing with large wax torches in their hands.

“A magnificent room hung with yellow damask and decorated with cabinets of the most precious Japan received the assembly. It was impossible not to be struck among other objects with its credences (or antique buffets) exhibiting much treasure of wrought plate, cups, vases and ewers of solid gold. It was from this room that the company passed into the library, fitted up with the same appropriate taste. The library opens by a large Gothic screen into the gallery, which, when finished, will be more than two hundred and seventy feet long. About half that length is now filled up and furnished in the most impressive monastic style, a superb shrine, with a beautiful statue of St. Anthony in marble and alabaster, the work of Rossi, placed upon it, with reliquaries studded with brilliants of immense value, the whole illuminated with a grand display of wax lights on candlesticks and candelabras of massive silver gilt, exhibited a scene at once strikingly splendid and awfully magnificent. The long series of lights on either side of the room, resting on stands of ebony, enriched with gold, and those on the shrine all multiplied and reflected in the great oriel opposite from its spacious squares of plate glass, while

the whole reflection narrowed into an endless perspective as it receded from the eye, produced a singular and magic effect.

“As the company entered the gallery solemn music struck the ear from some invisible quarter, as if from behind the screen of scarlet curtains which backed the shrine, or from its canopy above, and suggested ideas of a religious service, ideas which, associated as they were, with so many appropriate objects addressed to the eye, recall the grand chapel scenes and ceremonies of our ancient Catholic times. After the scenic representation a collation was provided in the library, consisting of various sorts of confectionery, served in gold baskets, with spiced wines, etc., whilst rows of chairs were placed beyond, which had just received the company above stairs. A large vacant space was left in front of the seats. The assembly no sooner occupied them than Lady Hamilton appeared in the character of Cleopatra, bearing the ashes of Germanicus in a golden urn, and as presenting herself before the Roman people with the design of exciting them to revenge the death of her husband ; who, after having been declared joint Emperor with Tiberius, fell a victim to his envy, and is supposed to have been poisoned by his order at the head of the forces which he was leading against the rebellious Armenians. Lady Hamilton displayed with truth and energy every gesture, attitude, and expression of countenance

which could be conceived in Cleopatra herself, best calculated to have moved the passions of the Romans in behalf of their favourite general. The action of her head, of her hands and arms, in the various positions of the urn, in her manner of presenting it before the Romans, or of holding it up to the gods in the act of supplication, was most classically graceful; every change of dress principally of the head, to suit the different situations in which she successively presented herself, was performed instantaneously, with the most perfect ease, and without retiring, or scarcely turning aside a moment from the spectators. In the last scene of this beautiful piece of pantomime, she appeared with a young lady of the company who was to personate her daughter. Her action in this part was so perfectly just and natural, and so pathetically addressed to the spectators as to draw tears from several of the company. It may be questioned whether this scene without theatrical assistance of other characters and appropriate circumstances, could possibly have been represented with more effect. The company, delighted and charmed, broke up and departed at eleven o'clock, to sup at the mansion house at Salisbury.

“On leaving this strange nocturnal scene of vast buildings and extensive forest, now rendered dimly and partially visible by the declining lights of lamps and torches, and the twinkling of a few scattered stars in a clouded sky, the

company seemed, as soon as they had passed the sacred boundary of the great wall, as if waking from a dream, or just freed from the influence of some magic spell. The enlargement of the Abbey was continued for some years after this fête; it was made at least four times larger before the workmen were dismissed."

Beckford's graphic description of his distinguished visitors, as he related it to a friend a few years previous to his decease, is as follows:—
"Sir William Hamilton I first knew at Naples. I was not more than twenty years of age then. Sir William came home to retire from his duties after thirty-six years of service. He rode the antiquarian hobby, but he understood his *rôle*. What a house his was at Naples! There were all the clever people, the artists, the antiquaries, the musicians, the beauty, and gaiety of the city. It was *my* home. Lady Hamilton was a charming creature; I do not mean the *Nelson*. The dawn of life was then as bright as the bay in which I looked every morning, and making allowance for its vivid feelings, I say truth when I speak of Lady Hamilton as an angel of purity. She lived uncorrupted in the midst of the Neapolitan Court. You must have known what the Court was to comprehend this in its full meaning. I never saw so heavenly-minded a creature. Her power of musical execution was miraculous, so sweetly soft was her touch—she seemed as if she threw her own essence into the music. I used

to listen to her like one entranced. She died in 1782. But I go from the point. Sir William Hamilton was nearly seventy when he came home. I invited him to Fonthill. He had married the too-famous Lady Hamilton, who survived him. She was nobody knew who. She came with Sir William. Lord Nelson and Wolcot arrived together. Lady Hamilton figured there before Lord Nelson, much to her own satisfaction, in the character of Cleopatra. She represented the character well; I must do her that justice. Perhaps Nelson inspired her.* Wolcot enjoyed the scenes greatly, and entertained everybody with his conversation. A pressing engagement called him away after a week's visit, and I never saw him again. How well he wrote, how original his style and humour! He understood character thoroughly, he played with human foibles. He repeated the following

* In answer to a question if he thought Lady Hamilton a fascinating woman, Beckford's reply was, "I never thought her so; she was somewhat masculine, but symmetrical in figure, so that Sir William called her his Grecian. Her countenance was agreeable—certainly not beautiful. She affected sensibility but felt none—was artful; and no wonder, she had been trained in the Court of Naples—a fine school for an Englishwoman of any stamp. It was a hell of corruption. Nelson was infatuated. She could make him believe anything—that the profligate Queen was a Madonna. He was her dupe. She persuaded him at last that she had a daughter—a Nelsoness. She never had a child in her life, in the opinion of those who knew something about her. Sir William Hamilton, my old friend, died two or three years after this visit. Some of his finest antiquities are in the museum."

epigram on his setting a nightcap on fire that he had borrowed of Lord Nelson while sitting up reading ;—

‘Take your nightcap again, my good lord,
I desire,
For I will not keep it a minute ;
What belongs to a Nelson where’er there’s
a fire
Is sure to be instantly in it.’”

Wolcot had lashed Sir William for his antiquarian enthusiasm in some of his odes several years before.

When Nelson was at Fonthill, Beckford proposed to give him a drive through his grounds. He had a road from fifteen to twenty miles in extent through his plantations. Nelson took a place by his side, but observing the horses a little lively he became so nervous and uncomfortable, in a few moments he requested his host to “pull up,” he could not bear it any longer. This is a singular instance of the effect of habit on a brave man of whom a battery of cañon quickened the courage, and who dreaded no foe sword in hand.



FONTHILL ABBEY, WILTS.

Built by W. Beckford, Esq. Foundation Stone laid in 1795. Completed in 1807. The building cost £273,000; on December 21st, 1825, the Tower fell with an awful crash.

CHAPTER VI.

FONTHILL ABBEY FINISHED.

 IN 1807 (seven years after Nelson's visit to Fonthill) the mansion was sufficiently far advanced to accommodate its founder. Now it was that England's wealthiest son seemed entitled to say—

“Yon palace, whose brave turret tops
Over the stately wood survey the copse,
Promiseth, if sought, a wished-for place of rest.”

The park and pleasure grounds were laid out with consummate art, in order to constitute, either by themselves or in connection with the Abbey, landscapes of the most delightful description. The avenue you entered on passing through the entrance gate, consisted of a narrow carriageway with a greensward path on each side bounded and shut in by a thick plantation, chiefly consisting of firs, larches, and pines, the spaces between the pillar-like stems of which were filled by a variety of flowering shrubs and wild underwoods, so that you could not judge of its extent except by the almost impenetrable darkness

which pervaded when you attempted to look through. This road was above a mile in length, and wound round perpetually, so that you could never see a hundred yards before you; and then the delightful carpet on each side of the road—it was rarer than that which was produced from the looms of Persia—as your feet pressed upon it, it sprang up from under them as if it were not made or accustomed to be trod upon. It was composed of a thick elastic body of various kinds of ever-green moss, low ground fern almost like moss, wild thyme, and numerous sweet-smelling ground flowers; the whole matted and interlaced together by a network of wild strawberries; their innocent little flowers peeping out here and there as if afraid, yet anxious to be seen. To notice the numerous roads, paths, ridges, dells, knolls, woods, and lawns within the enclosed area of the Fonthill grounds would I fear be tedious and prolix to the reader, but we must not omit to notice the *American plantations*, for here grew in apparent native wildness almost every kind of the American flowering shrub and tree. The mangolia, azalea, rhododendron-ponticum, coccinea-aurantina, coccinea-major-flammea, rosa-carolinensis, calicanthus-floridus, angelica, robinia-latifolia, with different species of andromeda abounded here; and in the flowering season perfumed the air with their spicy effluvia:

“While groves of Eden, vanished now so long,
Live in description, and look green in song.”

The luxuriance of the shrubs and trees in this part of the grounds, the wildness of some spots contrasted with the smoothness and softness of others, the shape and undefined borders of the lake, all conspired to render it interesting to every person, but more peculiarly to the artist and botanist. A profusion of English and foreign heaths were planted on the sides of the paths. In a deep hollow, apparently the crater of a volcano, was a lake, which though of small extent, was a fine feature of the grounds, whether viewed from the Abbey, from various stations among the woods, or from different parts of its banks. The latter were skirted and fringed with woods, whose pendant branches hung over, were reflected in, and kissed the rippled wave. Flocks of wild ducks, cootes, &c., with the long-necked heron, abounded in all seasons, and served at once to diversify and give interest to the scene. In a narrow dell at the southern extremity of this lake was a large wheel with attached hydraulic machines for forcing water up the hill to supply the house.

The site of the Abbey was a lofty terrace, having an abrupt descent to the south, a continued but irregular surface to the east and west, and terminating each way with a high knoll and steep ridge. Northward the ground sloped more gently; but from the natural height of situation and the altitude of the edifice it was seen from a considerable distance in every

direction. Its towers commanded very extensive and diversified views ;—to the south were seen the woods and buildings of Wardour Castle, terminated by a long bare ridge of the plain, or downs ; south-westward the eye ranged over the rugged, sandy knoll of Donhead ; beyond was seen the tower of Shaftesbury, and an extensive tract of Dorsetshire. Immediately to the west were descried the irregular grounds of East and West Knoyle, also the town of Mere, backed by the fine woods of Stourhead. A little to the northward the eye embraced an extensive range of Somersetshire, with the vast woods about Longleat. Directly to the north was seen the borough of Hindon,* with extensive but flat tracts of down country, contrasted to which, looking eastward, the eye dwelt with delight on a broad fertile valley, abounding with woods, enlivened with seats and villages, and enriched with the manufacturing town of Wilton and the interesting city of Salisbury. Such were the general objects and features surrounding, but at some distance from the Abbey.

“ Crowning a gradual hill the mansion rose
In antient English grandeur : turrets, spires
And windows, climbing high from base to roof
In wide and radiant rows, bespoke its birth
Coeval with those rich cathedral fanes

* In 1784 Beckford sat in Parliament for Wells and in 1790 for Hindon.

(Gothic ill-named) where harmony results
From disunited parts; on shapes minute,
At once distinct and blended, boldly form
One vast majestic whole."

Mason's English Garden.

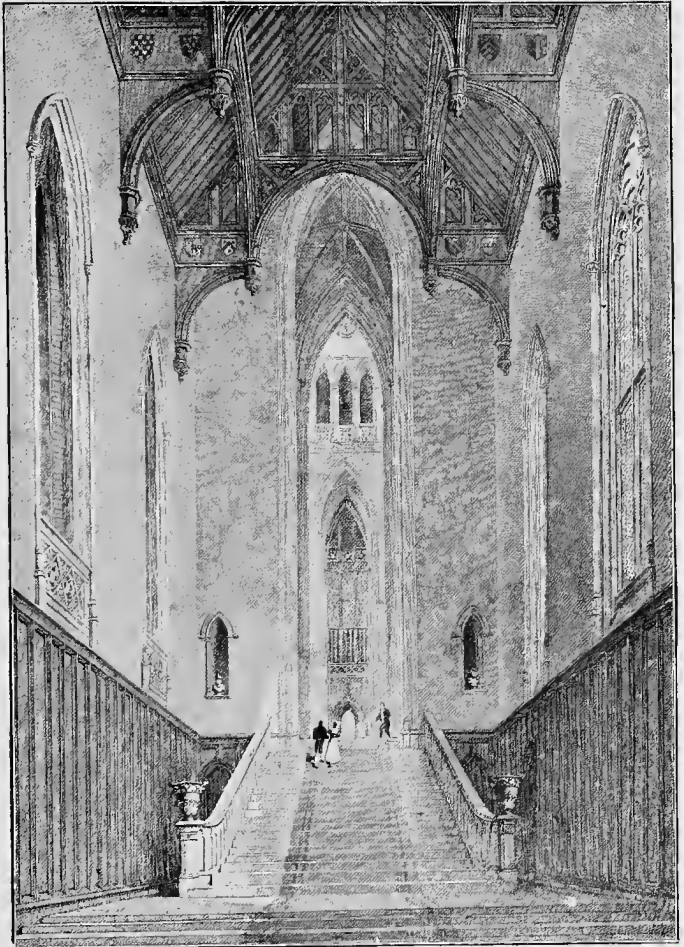
The Abbey consisted of five distinct portions—1st, the hall; 2nd, the central tower; 3rd, the north wing; 4th, the eastern portion; and 5th, the south wing. The exterior measurements were three hundred and twelve feet from north to south, two hundred and seventy feet from east to west, the central tower two hundred and seventy-six feet high from the floor to the top of the pinnacles. It may be easily supposed that Beckford, with a vivid fancy, a mind stored with information from extensive travel, would not be satisfied with anything of common-place or even usual character. He would require novelty, grandeur, complexity, and even sublimity; and it may be safely asserted that no style or class of architecture is so well adapted to effect these purposes as the Gothic or ecclesiastical.

The entrance hall, or grand vestibule, was a large and lofty apartment; it was entered by a spacious doorway, with a pointed arch, to which were attached a pair of folding doors, with a small door inserted. These doors were thirty feet high, divided by ribs or mouldings, studded with nails and supported by ponderous metal hinges. The hall measured sixty-eight feet long,

twenty-eight feet wide, and seventy-eight feet in height. Three tall windows on the south side, with stained glass by Eginton, served to give light to the interior, and a small window with stained glass was inserted near the top of the gable. The ease with which the ponderous doors turned on their hinges was not the only merit to be ascribed to them. Arched like the gates of monarchs, they were

“ Arch’d so high that giants may get through,
And keep their impious turbans on.”

Ascending by a flight of twenty-two steps, guarded by a stone balustrade on each side, you approached, through a small but lofty vestibule, the *octangular apartment, saloon, or louvre*, beneath the central tower. This presented a magnificent and imposing scene, or, rather, series of scenes, and was on a scale and in harmony with the spacious entrance hall. Four arches to the east, west, north, and south communicated to the dining-room, the hall, Edward’s gallery, and St. Michael’s gallery. Edward’s gallery was so named from a series of splendid emblazonments which marked the numerous descents of Mr. Beckford and Lady Margaret Gordon from Edward III. A full-length portrait, copied from one at Windsor, and seventy-two emblazoned shields round the frieze of knights companions of the most noble Order of the Garter, and from whom Mr. Beckford and his lady are lineally



GRAND ENTRANCE TO FONTHILL ABBEY.

descended, were parts of the adornments of this splendid gallery. In the recesses of the eastern wall were six bookcases, and in the centre a fine alabaster chimney-piece; opposite to, and corresponding with which, were seven pointed windows with stained glass. The *corridor*, or approach to the oratory, was a continuation of the Edward's gallery, and was designed to produce a solemn and gloomy effect. Three perforated bronze doors on each side communicated with mysterious recesses, somewhat resembling monastic confessionals. A doorway from the eastern recess led to the Lancaster staircase tower, which formed an approach to an upper gallery, and led to bedrooms in the tower above. North of the tower was a square apartment, called the Sanctuary. This room was peculiarly beautiful and impressive; it prepared the eye and mind to approach and appreciate the oratory. A richly-chased gold lamp was suspended from the ceiling. At the east end rose an altar spread with a Persian carpet of figured silk, on which stood a marble statue of St. Anthony of Padua, executed by Rossi. On each side of the altar were placed lofty candelabra, supporting tapers of extraordinary size; whilst two small lancet windows, filled with stained glass, admitted a glimmering, many-coloured light. The union of beauty and solemnity, of softness, repose, and harmony which pervaded this part of the building cannot be adequately

described. When dimly illumined by the rays of its own simply elegant lamps, which

“through the room

Teach light to counterfeit a gloom,”

whilst the windows of the adjoining galleries were shrouded by their crimson, purple, and gold draperies, the soft solemn organ sending its mellow tone through the echoing galleries, whilst the odours of eastern perfumes contributed their fragrance to feast another sense, it is more easy to fancy than to depict the seraphic influence of such a scene.

Ascending by the Lancaster tower you were conducted to a floor over the Edward gallery, consisting of a *state bedroom*, a gallery crowded with curious enamels and pictures by early masters, and a Tribune; this was a square apartment having a handsome oriental alabaster chimney-piece, a large oriel window facing the west, and an ebony bedstead with furniture, part of which belonged to King Henry the Seventh. —The Tribune was filled with pictures, cabinets, etc., and opened by a very picturesquely enriched balcony into the great octagon. Near the great octagon was a circular staircase which communicated to a suite of apartments, over the gallery, and which Mr. Beckford occupied as a private sitting-room, library, bedroom, and dressing-room.

In the St. Michael gallery were six curious and interesting *ebony chairs* which formerly belonged

to the magnificent and haughty Wolsey and were part of the splendid furniture of Esher Palace. The cabinets of Kings and Princes at home and abroad were ransacked to supply the collection of rarities at Fonthill. Vases of exquisite workmanship, cups, salvers, and other articles wrought in precious metal ; carvings in ivory ; sculptured gems, etc., etc. Here was to be seen a mounted Nautilus upon an ivory plinth carved by Benvenuto Cellini ; a vase of single Hungarian topaz, intended as a marriage present by the same artist ; a hookah set with precious stones, formerly the property of Tippoo Saib ; a crystal cabinet that had belonged to Pope Paul V. It is said his collection of old china was more extensive than valuable, one room containing 2,400 dishes of foreign china. It would be tedious to give a description of the various paintings that adorned the walls: one, a Madonna by Raphael, was purchased by the trustees of our National Gallery for five thousand guineas. His anxiety to possess first-rate specimens of art was shown when he offered M. Angerstein £20,000 for a picture, now in the National Gallery, painted by Del Piombo. When asked which of Raphael's pictures he liked best he replied, " The Madonna del Spesimo at Madrid—it produced more striking effect upon me than any other picture I ever saw. What religion there is in his paintings—they breathe all they represent—there is an atmosphere of piety about them. His pencil was

baptised in the fires of devotion as that of no mortal ever was. One must become half-Catholic to enter fully into the glories of Italian art. Religion with us is a cold, reluctant duty. We acknowledge God but fear to love Him. We are afraid of anything that fits our minds for devotion. We are too apt to make religion a duty, not an affection, and when the formality of worship is over we have done. The true spirit, superstition, devotion, or whatever you like to call it, was in the heart of the Italian artist—it oozed out at the end of his pencil, bathing his work in the beauty of holiness.” Every one who trafficked in first-rate paintings knew Beckford well. No dealer offered him any fine work of art of which he could not tell the exact value. He was often tendered a rarity for no other purpose than to ascertain its real worth. If he offered a price for a picture he never gave more, but if the offer were declined, he uniformly abandoned the purchase. If what he sought to purchase was really good, he was not niggardly in his tender, though the sum was his ultimatum.

CHAPTER VII.

VISIT OF THE DUCHESS OF GORDON TO FONTHILL.

MR. Beckford in his early years appears to have been fond of a joke. The following is copied from "Chambers's Book of Days":—

"I once shut myself up at Fonthill to be out of the way of a lady—an ungallant thing to any lady on earth but with her to whom it occurred. The late Duchess of Gordon, who was the continual talk of the town for her curious mercenary ways and mode of entrapping men with her brood of daughters. I could have served no other lady so I hope. I never enjoyed a joke so much. At that time everybody talked of Mr. Beckford's enormous wealth, everything about me was exaggerated proportionately. I was in consequence a capital bait for the Duchess—so she thought; I thought very differently. She had been told that even a dog kennel at Fonthill was a palace—my house a Potosi, what more on earth could be desired by a marrying mother for

a daughter? I might have been aged and imbecile—no matter, such is fashion's philosophy. I got a hint from town of her intention to surprise me with her hard face at Fonthill—a sight I would gladly dispense with. I resolved to give her a useful lesson. Fonthill was put in order for her reception, with everything I could devise to receive her magnificently—not only to receive her, but to turn the table upon her for the presumption she had that I was to become the plaything of her purposes. The splendour of her reception must have stimulated her in her object. I designed it should operate in that manner. I knew her aim, she little thought so. My arrangements being made I ordered my *Major-domo* to say on the Duchess's arrival, that it was unfortunate—everything being arranged for her Grace's reception, Mr. Beckford had shut himself up on a sudden, a way he had at times, and that it was more than his place was worth to disturb him, as his master only appeared when he pleased; forbidding interruption, even if the King came to Fonthill—I had just received a large lot of books—nothing could be more opportune. I had them removed to the rooms of which I had taken possession. The Duchess conducted herself with wonderful equanimity and seemed much surprised and gratified at what she saw, and the mode of her reception—just as I desired she should be, quite on tiptoe to have me for a son-in-law. When she got up in the morning her

first question was 'Do you think Mr. Beckford will be visible to-day?'

" 'I cannot inform your Grace—Mr. Beckford's movements are so very uncertain—it is possible. Would your Grace like to take an airing in the park—a walk in the gardens?' Everything which Fonthill could supply was made the most of, whetting her appetite to her purpose still more. My master of the ceremonies to the Duchess did not know what to make of his master, the Duchess, or his own position. "Perhaps Mr. Beckford will be visible to-morrow?" was the Duchess's daily consolation. To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow came and went—no Mr. Beckford. I read on, determined not to see her. Was it not serving a woman of such a coarse nature quite right?

"She remained seven or eight days, magnificently entertained, and then went away without seeing me. She was very angry, and said in her rage things too scandalous to have escaped any woman's lips but her own. Think of such a woman's vengeance — such a woman as the Duchess was, who never suffered anything to stand in the way of her objects!

"The splendour and wealth she saw dispensed at Fonthill no doubt increased her disappointment, and enhanced the bitterness of the contumely she afterwards heaped upon me."

CHAPTER VIII.

SIC GLORIA TRANSIT MUNDI.

MR. Beckford, for about 14 years, must have revelled in the exquisite scenery around Fonthill, and the valuable and luxurious contents of the interior ; but about this time “ A change came o’er the spirit of the dream.” In 1821 in consequence of extraordinary depreciation of West Indian property and produce, whence Mr. Beckford had derived the greater part of his income—having expended immense sums of money in building Fonthill Abbey—also the unfavourable decision of a law-suit—induced Mr. Beckford to offer a considerable part of the contents for sale. Mr. Beckford says, “the Chancellor took from me by a decree, in the course of what the lawyers call justice, two large estates that had been sixty and more years in my family—you may imagine their importance when I tell you that there were fifteen hundred slaves upon them. This decree, too, the Chancellor accompanied with the reflection that ‘ Mr.

Beckford had plenty of property left.' That was my reason for quitting Fonthill. I was sorry to throw many poor people out of employ, and to stay further improvements, but I had no choice—living there would have been too expensive." His attention having been called to a paragraph in the *Times* which stated that Fonthill had cost him a million of money his reply was—"The love of the world for anything but the truth is as great as ever. Now I will tell you what it did cost, within a thousand pounds. My whole outlay on Fonthill was £273,000, some hundreds over that sum it may be, no more." When asked if it caused him much pain to leave Fonthill, his reply was "Not so much as you think. I can bend to fortune. I have philosophy enough not to cry like a child about a plaything."

In the year 1822 the contents of Fonthill Abbey were advertised to be sold by public auction. In the *Gentleman's Magazine* for October appeared the following remarks:—"The pleasing vision is now passed, and the noise of the Auctioneer's hammer will now be heard—silence pervades the long-drawn aisles, the lofty portal is closed, and the Abbot has returned to his cloister." A day or two previous to the appointed commencement of the auction it was publicly announced that Fonthill Abbey, with the estate, was collectively sold to John Farquhar, Esq., a gentleman who had realised a large fortune in India, for the sum of £330,000. In

the summer of the following year “the splendid effects” were again announced to be sold by auction by Mr. H. Phillips, and the grounds, house, and contents were again exhibited to visitors. Thirty-three days were occupied on the disposal of the contents. Beckford says, “I sold but little of what I valued at Fonthill. I had not room enough for all the books I possessed in any other place. Do not suppose more than half of what was sold at Fonthill was mine. I disposed of my superfluous furniture, for which I had no use, and also of *some* costly things not of much utility—suitable there only. I would not disgrace my house by Chinese furniture—that was not mine—it was put in by the auctioneer.” The sale created an excitement throughout the nation, and during its continuance such was the influx of visitors that not a lodging was to be had for many miles round. It is recorded that between seven and eight thousand catalogues were sold at a guinea each.

At this time Mr. Beckford wrote several poems, far inferior to his prose it is true, but proving his sincere love of country life. In some lines on leaving Fonthill, after describing the changes of the seasons and various rural objects, he says :

“ But though the scenes you now deplore
With heart and eye be your’s no more,
Though now each long-known object seem
Unreal as the morning’s dream ;

Yet still with retrospective glance
Or rapt in some poetic trance,
At will may every charm renew,
Each smiling prospect still review ;
Through memory's power and fancy's aid
The pictured phantoms ne'er shall fade."

Mr. Beckford must have considered himself very fortunate in disposing of the Fonthill estate, for in three years after the sale the tower fell with an awful crash (December 21, 1825) destroying in its fall a considerable part of the edifice below. His statement was that he paid the architect nearly twenty thousand pounds for his part of the work, and that it was arranged to be built on an arched foundation. Mr. Redding mentions with this a curious circumstance : One of the persons employed in the building found himself dying, and in a feeling of remorse sent for Mr. Beckford to communicate the fact that there was no arch. "It is built on the sand and some day will fall down." Mr. Beckford communicated this to Mr. Farquhar, who replied it would last his life time. It fell soon afterwards. Happily no one was hurt by the accident. It is reported that when news of what had happened was taken to Beckford he replied with a *sang froid* worthy of his father : "Well, the tower has paid its possessor a greater compliment than it ever did to me. I had it for nearly twenty years, and during all that time it neither bowed nor curtesied." Fonthill from this time was destined

to undergo greater changes. We read in the *New Monthly Magazine*, Feb., 1826:—"Mr. Farquhar has disposed of the fine domain surrounding Fonthill Abbey, comprising some of the best game preserves in the West of England, together with the Abbey itself and above 500 acres of Flower Garden"; and in March, 1826, "Fonthill Abbey is at length uninhabited; it is stript of the whole of its costly furniture and most of the principal windows are taken out. But a few months since it was little expected that this princely mansion would so soon go to ruin and become a place of shelter for the feathered tribe;" April, 1826. "The Abbey has become a ruin and the grounds are divided. J. Bennett, Esq., M.P. for Wilts, has purchased to the amount of £130,000, taking also the Abbey in its present state as building materials. Earl Grosvenor purchased another portion for £45,000. Mr. W. King another portion for £20,000. Mr. G. Mortimer another portion for £30,000, and now what remains?"

The baseless fabric of a vision
Leaving *but* a wreck behind;

about sixty feet of the tower and a small part of the building, which is used as a cottage and is in the occupation of some of the employés of the estate." Some 38 years ago a mansion was erected about half-a-mile from the Abbey by the late Marquis of Westminster. It is now in the possession and occupation of Sir Michael Shaw

Stewart, Bart., who married a daughter of the late Marquis and sister of the present Duke of Westminster.

Mr. Beckford appears to have had a fearful looking forward to casualties at Fonthill; he told a friend in after life that he apprehended he might be crushed like a lobster in his shell. The thought (or something like it) "that man's life is a tower, with a staircase of many steps, that as he toileth upward crumble successively behind him," must often have entered his contemplative mind. The tower at Fonthill, Mr. Beckford said, was a source of continual anxiety—"I felt like Damocles with the sword over my head." The foreman of the building had informed him that the tower was very insecure. "Good heaven!" said I, "what is to be done? Cannot any means be adopted to render it safe—we might buttress up the foundation in some way?" The answer was, 'No, nothing but taking down and rebuilding it from the foundation will do.' This was unwelcome news. The architects had been not only negligent but obstinate. Previous to any information having been given me that the tower was insecure I went outside a window where a stone balustrade had been erected contrary to my wish. This annoyed me a good deal. I put on a pair of thick boots, and planting my back firmly against the inside of the passage, I kicked with all my might against the top of the balustrade again and again. Soon loosening the stones,

down they went a hundred feet crash upon the floor beneath, covering the furniture with broken rubbish. The balustrade was then replaced with shields and more suitable designs I gave them a lesson."

We conclude that Mr. Beckford must have made known to Mr. Farquhar his views as to the instability of the building, and must have sold it for a consideration with all its faults, risks, and blemishes. Considering the enormous amount of valuable land connected with the estate and the amount of money it realised when Mr. Farquhar disposed of it, the Abbey could not have been reckoned of much more value than the material of which it was composed. The probabilities are that in concluding the sale of the Fonthill estate the Abbey was thrown into the scale as a sort of *make weight*.* This would have been quite characteristic of Mr. Beckford. There being no surprise or alarm exhibited, and the cool manner in which Mr. Farquhar received the

* Mr. Farquhar was a Scotchman by birth of very penurious habits who had made a vast fortune in India, but who continued to dress and live in the meanest style. He bought the palace and park, not because, like old Scrooge, a dream had induced him to rush from grinding parsimony to open-hearted benevolence, but because it appeared a good opportunity for increasing his store, aided by the experience and talent of the Bond-street auctioneer. It is true he took up his abode in it for a time, but he bought it not to inhabit but to sell, and accordingly it was announced in the following year that the whole, as the phrase is, was to be brought to the hammer.—*Mirror*, May 11, 1844.

information, appears to justify this supposition. We have no record of the Abbey being refurnished, or of any large number of retainers being kept on the premises. Two years after the sale of the contents, as stated, the tower fell, and in about four years was a ruin.

CHAPTER IX.

LANSDOWN TOWER.

“The palace termed the ‘Delight of the Eyes’ was one entire enchantment. Rareties collected from every corner of the earth were there found in such profusion as to dazzle and confound, but for the order in which they were arranged.” *Vathek.*

HEN Mr. Beckford had sold and quitted Fonthill in 1823, he took up his residence at Lansdown Crescent, Bath, he then being sixty-three years of age. Scarcely was he known as a resident before a beautiful tower, planned in the purest taste, suddenly appeared on the summit of the highest eminence in the vicinity. Half an extensive hillside was enclosed. Massive stone portals uprose here and there as if by magic, their erection being superintended by Mr. Beckford in person. He thus preserved his health by devoting a large portion of his time in the open air, and did great good in expending large sums with mechanics and work-people. The following account is from the *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette* of July 23rd, 1827 :—



LANSDOWN CRESCENT.
(Showing Beckford's Houses joined at the end.)

“ We have the pleasure of announcing that the imposing structure which Mr. Beckford has erected on the brow of Lansdown, near this city, is now completed as far as regards the masonry work. The building is square, to an altitude of 130 feet from the foundation ; it then assumes an octagonal form for 12 feet more ; and this is crowned by 12 feet of octagonal wood-work of a lantern shape, which will be protected by an iron pillar at each angle, and these pillars will be gilt. This will constitute the apex of the tower. From it the spirited proprietor will have the gratification of viewing a prospect of rich and varied extent, as we understand the summit presents to the eye of the spectator the meanderings of the Severn, the sailing of the steam packets from Bristol, the immense track of Salisbury Plain, and even Mr. Beckford’s former residence, Fonthill. The tower reflects great credit on Mr. Goodridge, the architect, and the opulent proprietor has the satisfaction of knowing that while he has been pursuing an object intended to gratify his own particular taste, he has at the same time conferred the most substantial benefits on the operative and labouring classes. We cordially wish Mr. Beckford many years’ enjoyment of his favourite projects.”

A similar report also appeared in the *Bath Journal* of July 30, 1827.

It is generally reported that Mr. Beckford, whilst looking through a telescope from his

tower at Lansdown, reported the circumstance of the fall of Fonthill Tower before the news had reached Bath. The following paragraph has been recently reprinted in a local history :—

“Each morning as Beckford passed into the south chamber of the Lansdown Tower he directed his telescope to the distant one at Fonthill, once his own. On the morning after it fell it would have been curious to note the expression on that proud face as he laid down the glass which no longer brought within view of his usual observation the familiar object which had now disappeared.”*

Living in accustomed seclusion, the author of “Vathek” was spoken of as the mysterious, haughty gentleman who lived in Lansdown-crescent. Some there were who thought he passed his time in working incantations, like his own Caliph. Surmises were current about a brood of dwarfs that vegetated in an apartment built over the archway connecting his two houses. The vulgar, poor and rich alike, gave a sort of half credit to cabalistical monstrosities invoked in that apartment. In a place of fashionable dissipation—picture galleries, a noble library, fine gardens, and the resources of intellect, to say nothing of a large domain of hillsides—were no

* Remembering that the tower of Fonthill fell down in 1825 and that the masonry work at Lansdown was not completed till 1827, this statement must be received with caution.

accountable means of passing time without a participation in the reigning frivolities of the hour ; astrology and the supernatural vocation of the Giaour were indispensable to make up the imaginary deficiency. The *per contra* arguments were the presence of the "Author of Vathek" at the floral shows in the city before the crowd attended, his intercourse with a few intellectual and professional men, and his being seen riding through the streets on a cream-coloured Arabian—not unfrequently with the Duke of Hamilton. Mr. Goodridge, the ingenious architect, had permission from Mr. Beckford to issue tickets for the purpose of viewing the grounds and the tower ; but, for reasons which he considered perfectly satisfactory, the permission had been withdrawn ; still he had only to ask for a ticket and he received it. The tower stood upwards of a mile from his residence in Lansdown-crescent, and is 800 feet above the level of the Avon. In the tower was one long, narrow room, fitted up as an oratory ; it was lit by small domes in the roof, which the architect had so contrived as to throw down a soft, subdued, harmonious light upon marble figures of the Virgin and Child at the end, opposite the entrance. The repose which reigned in the room, through the soothing effect of the light, was peculiarly impressive. "That is the true light of devotion," Mr. Beckford observed. "It is an excitement in itself to solemn thought and prayer—the dim

religious light of the sanctuary—the Bath Abbey church is of the later Gothic—too light for such an effect.” The room at the top of the tower was of cast iron, copied from the Choragic monument of Lysicrates at Athens, resting upon a square base, joined by the walls of the tower. The tower, up to the lantern, gracefully diminishes from the foundation. The appearance of hill top after hill top on the Somersetshire side of the Avon, has a novel and beautiful effect ; on every side the view is striking. All the southern shore of the Avon is visible. In the North-west direction, the sight, often ranging over the barren table-land of the down, unadorned with a single tree, is arrested by the solitary monument of Sir Beville Grenville, who fell in the battle of Lansdown. This view, naturally tinged with melancholy, is still more saddened by the monument and its associations.

Mr. Beckford had extraordinary sight, nearly to the close of his life ; when he was upwards of 80 years of age, he could read without spectacles. At seventy-five his activity was so great he could mount rapidly to the top of the tower without halting—no small exertion for many who were fifteen or twenty years younger. The windows in the lantern were of plate-glass, moving in perpendicular grooves. The wind at that elevation being exceedingly violent, great strength of material was required. Warm air from below was conveyed by heated tubes to the lantern, that the

damp might not be injurious to the woodwork. It delighted him to view a long extended landscape. "I must," he said, "elevate myself to do this, even on Lansdown. The tower at Lansdown was as necessary an appendage to such a structure, as it would have been to a real abbey. I love building, planting, gardening, whatever will keep me employed in the open air. I like to be among workmen; wishing to have something besides a study on the summit of the hill, where the view is so extensive I determined upon erecting the tower." Mr. Beckford, with his head gardener, Vincent, overlooked every operation, there was not a plant or flower there with which they were unacquainted. His custom in fine weather was to rise early, ride to the tower, walk back and breakfast, and then read until a little before noon, generally making pencil notes in the margin of the book; transact business with his steward afterwards until two o'clock, continue to read or write, and if the weather was fine, ride out for exercise. He was never idle. When planting or building, he passed the larger part of the day where the work was proceeding. One evening, a friend accompanying Mr. Beckford through his grounds, after a visit to the tower, was curious to learn what reconciled him so perfectly to the locality of Lansdown after the vastness of Fonthill, with its extensive gardens and groves of almost Oriental beauty. In putting the question it was felt with

what courtesy and candour it would be answered. Extending his arms and elevating his voice, as if excited by "the poet's fire," he exclaimed—"This! This!! The finest prospect in Europe;" pointing to the vast panoramic view around, to the countless hills near, the far Welsh mountains, the blue fading distance, and then to the most beautiful of our ancient cities, which, at the moment, slept beneath, enveloped in the rich purple mist of a summer sunset. "This" he repeated. At that moment a prospect more enchanting, even in a Southern climate, could scarcely have been presented to the view. The judgment exhibited in the treatment of the grounds shewed that here, as at Fonthill on a gigantic scale, the same mind could select whatever was most perfect in adaptation to local circumstances.

Beckford was of an impatient disposition, furious when in anger, but soon pacified, and then hardly knew how to make sufficient restitution. One day he told his head gardener, Vincent, to shift some seats in the grounds, which he called toad-stools, because they consisted of a round seat fixed to a stake driven into the ground. Vincent, wishing his master should be satisfied with the spot himself to which they were removed, placed the tops loosely upon the stakes to have his opinion as to the site chosen. Going into his grounds one morning and seeing the seats he at once seated himself on one of

them, and fell sprawling on the turf, seat and all. He sprang up in a furious passion, his dignity was offended—his cane was in his hand and he struck at Vincent with it, who speedily retreated among the young trees, his master after him in a rage. It was a curious thing to see two persons both beyond seventy pursued and pursuing. It came to nothing more than a short race, Vincent dodged among the trees and his master, recollecting himself, ceased the pursuit. The next morning he sent five pounds to Vincent, who said he should like such a race every day upon the same terms.* Another anecdote is still remembered by others beside myself who used to see him riding and walking around our city. He entered the gravel walk, at the end of Brock-street, where was a man with a broom in his hand soliciting alms. Beckford threw half-a-crown to him. The beggar seeing him wending his way towards Weston turned off to a gate and there waited his approach, thinking there was a chance of receiving further *backsheesh*. Beckford recognised him as a beggar he had so recently relieved—he dropped his stick across his shoulders in good style for what he con-

* Mr. Beckford would speak harshly, or more than speak, to a servant or villager that came in his way, but soon relenting it was his care nobly to recompense the party he had outraged. It was shrewdly suspected that some of those who experienced the throb of his impetuous anger had artfully put themselves in the way of it, for the sake of the healing donation which was likely to follow.
—*Mirror*, May 11, 1844.

sidered his unrighteous solicitation. Even in his almsgiving Beckford had his peculiarities.—“One day, as he was riding near Bath, he was struck by seeing a miserable object in the road who had lost both legs. The man did not beg, perhaps from fear of one of those laws so little creditable to legislative humanity—that as the quantum of misery increases deems it good policy to sharpen its intensity. He pulled up his horse, not knowing he was observed but by his groom. ‘Poor fellow, you must be miserable indeed.’ Then, putting his hand into his pocket and flinging down to the dismembered man whatever money met his grasp, without looking at it—sovereigns and silver together—he rode onwards.”*

When walking with a friend in his garden he came across his favourite gardener, Vincent. He exclaimed, “Here is my old gardener, almost as old as myself—equally uncomfortable as myself if idle. Well, Vincent, what is it you want—do you want a job?” “Yes, your honour, I want to plant some trees between the two gardens. The sun shines dreadfully hot there in summer—if that were done you might walk in the shade all the way up.” “Nonsense, Vincent. Before trees can grow up there where will you and I be?” “Don’t say that, sir,” said

* More substantial illustrations of Mr. Beckford’s liberality will appear in a forthcoming chapter.

Vincent, "you can trust my word—you shall walk up there under the shade of your own trees in the spring—next spring—every tree twelve feet high. If you, sir, find the money, I will find the trees. It is the first week in October, the time to set about it." "Well, Vincent, I will find the money, get to work, get the trees." "I was out with the work people from morning till night planting. In another year the trees were all we could desire for shade. I have often heard since the spring songs of the birds there, on that hill where there was only turf so lately. How fond I am of the lark's song, the warble as it mounts in the air, it is more delightful to me than the song of any other bird. There is a particular gleesomeness in the lark's song. It is the song of a glad, innocent heart on a sunny day. I hear it on Lansdown with as much pleasure now as ever I did in my life. Nature never lets us tire, we never forget the love to our mother. Abroad or at home I always gave some time to solitude. I have sometimes felt unable to separate myself without great difficulty from certain spots that fixed my attention. Night has joined me in my noonday resting-place, too far sometimes from the halting place of my attendants; carriage, friends, servants, if with me, I have suffered to proceed, and feeling the inclination irresistible have mounted an attendant's horse and rode, my heart exulting, into some romantic mountain gorge, got off,

flung myself upon a bed of verdure on the banks of a sparkling stream, and wished the moments I spent there, and the sensations I experienced, to be eternal—sensations with which, I suppose, the couple in Paradise filled their measure of happiness. To me, nothing can surpass in attraction a hillock in a vineyard at sunset—a peasant's vineyard among the Appennines near a gushing stream of water. I can call such a spot to my recollection at this moment. Give me my books and, if circumstances required it, I could retire to a cottage and leave my palace without a pang. In my early youth I disliked large companies. I could not think ; it confused my ideas. I have lived in Switzerland among the Alps ; at twenty-six, under a bitter domestic calamity, I found their solitude soothe me as nothing else would—I have loved solitude ever since. I had inexhaustible animal spirits, but they never prevented my stealing into temporary peace, beyond the dissipation in which I might be figuring—my letters on Portugal show that—you have read my running away from the gluttons of Batalha and their pampered dinners. What a ride I had that day. Massena, and the French burned that superb monastery—it looks well as a ruin I dare say—I should like to see it now—what a lesson it would be to the recollection of former pomps and vanities. Time takes all from us but his hard lessons. Wits are said to be great diners—dining much in company ruins health.

When the stomach goes, the man dies—beware of dinners.”

He was so passionately fond of old and rare books that it was a greater treat to him to be in their company than in the society of the noblest men and women in England.

“ I want to be alone, to find some shade,
Some solitary gloom ; there to shake off
These harsh tumultuous cares that vex my life—
This sick ambition on itself recoiling ;
And there to listen to the gentle voice,
The sigh of peace—something I know not what,
That whispers transport to my heart.”

—*Thompson.*

“ 1840—Warm summer morning in August—
Time 6 a.m. After a feverish slumber (writes
Mr. Cyrus Redding) I mounted Lansdown Hill,
at the foot of which I had taken up my quarters.
The atmosphere on the hill-top was deliciously
fresh. Not a cloud sullied the blue serene ; the
sun had attained but a trifling elevation. The
western shadows were projected long and gaunt
from tower and tree ; the herbage glistened with
the dew, and the lark with hurried wings—

Singing she mounts ; her airy wings out-
stretched

Towards heaven, as if from heaven her notes
she fetched.

“ On a sudden the resonance of a church bell
announced the hour of seven. I began to descend

towards the population beneath that had not yet made itself visible. Around me the bees more wakeful were humming in beguilement of their tiny toils, and the butterflies all gaiety of plumage emulated the *belles* not far off in the rainbow-hued robes, which the last had doffed from the ball of the previous night.

“On coming to a mass of lofty buildings in my descent, behind which a road pointed to the right that might lead into the city by another route than that I had before traversed, I turned aside. After following the new direction for some distance between stone walls an archway appeared on the left connecting two large houses. Through the opening thus afforded, still tinged with the gray vapour of the morning, was seen uprising the most beautiful of cities. Trees, gardens, towers, and architectural magnificence, backed up by abrupt eminences, studded with villas, and dotted with groves worthy of Arcadia, enlivened the landscape. Opposite the arch a road pointed upward between walls, over which fruit hung thickly clustering. Some little way further on a door wide open disclosed extensive gardens. On the north side stretched double walls one above another. Parallel with the highest ran a wall leading to an antique gateway embattled, machicolated, and nearly buried in trees. I never saw such a prodigality of fruitage in every variety. The walls were in a blush with the warm tints of the peach and other wall fruit,

glowing freshly in the bright morning sun. I was tempted to enter, expecting to find some one to whom, apologising for my intrusion, I might inquire who was the owner of so prolific a spot. No one appeared—all was silence. I walked along the principal path, overlaid with glittering quartz. ‘My spirits fled to my heart in fear.’ The place seemed to be under the spell of enchantment. I lingered within the charmed precincts, but no creature appeared to warn or welcome. Here were long espaliers that groaned beneath their precious products of apple and pears, there huge pendant plums of all colours and sizes. In front a flight of steps led to a terrace. These I mounted, traversed a terrace almost Italian in appearance, and reached the embattled gate, which I found unlocked, pushed gently open, passed out and closed—the work of a moment. I was not displeased at finding myself beyond the garden in which I had trespassed. I now trod a field of some extent, bordered by hedgerows of thorn cut in irregular clumps, apparently to avoid the sameness of stiff clipping in the monotonous mode customary. I was on the ascent of the hill, the higher side of the field being bounded by palisades, beyond which a public path crossed, a second row of palisades intervened, and then another enclosure appeared, which I entered, and afterwards another. An irresistible desire to explore the domain on which I had so trespassed spurred me

forward. It was better to be met, I thought, in an open field by the owner than in a walled garden filled with choice fruit. I did not fear being taken for a Nebuchadnezzar, and punished for the theft of animal sustenance—the garden was a different thing; a repository of every species of fruit that could lead to temptation might give well-grounded suspicion of furtive intention.

“I next arrived at a plantation, having a turf walk curving along the hillside. At short intervals, on each hand, beds of thyme, marjoram, and all kinds of scented and aromatic herbs were introduced, as if they had sprung up naturally, perfuming the air with their sweets. Rude seats, formed of the blocked section of a felled tree, were seen in manifold situations. In one place, where there was an elbow in the road, on turning suddenly round I beheld one of the most beautiful views that could delight human sight. The elevation was considerable. Far beneath in snaky curves a bright stream shone like liquid silver,* tower, hamlet, grove, meadow, hill, mansion, and villa, were seen under a variety of aspects, until, blending in the landscape, they composed the indistinct distance. I flung myself supinely upon a bed of camomile, that exuded its well known aromatic perfume. A gentle breeze had arisen, tempering the sun’s heat, and keeping

* The river Avon flowing from Bath towards Bristol.

the distant promontories in haze. I lingered on the spot, comforting myself that if seen by some surly gamekeeper, I might still escape with no other injury than the infliction upon the ear of some vulgar adjuration. I had neither gun nor snare in my possession. These reflections were of no moment for no intruder upon my intrusion manifested himself.

“I now came upon an open space of ground covered with grass-grown mounds, where all was solitary, as if it were the site of a buried city. From hence there was no prospect, the irregular sod being on one hand, and the front view bounded by plantations. On the left, in a wall of rock, yawned cavernous excavations that had been made at some remote time for the excavation of stone. The sky above and desolation beneath imparted to the spirit the idea of an utter separation from the rest of the species.

“Proceeding along the west boundary of this rude spot, seemingly shut out from the world, a gate met my view, leading into a plantation, and passing through, a little way on, a wall with a small door crossed the path. I had gone on so far prosperously ; it was not amiss to tempt the end of the adventure, which seemed now of ‘ the stuff that dreams are made of.’ I lifted the latch and entered. What was my surprise—my amazement at the transition from the savage to the cultivated—from the deformed to the beautiful ! I found myself at the entrance to a garden of a

thousand flowers—a garden glowing with roses in full bloom, through the centre of which the path led. On both sides the loveliest flowers were blooming, and sending up their odours even to faintness from the intensity of their perfume. They thickened and multiplied as I advanced along an enchanted spot, shut in on all sides, breathing the gales of Araby the Blest. Never did I behold flowers in such profusion—the gardens of Gul could but have rivalled them. Yet no neat parterres, no clipped borders were to be seen. Every species of roses grew at random. Still I stealthily advanced, and still neither the variety nor the quantity appeared to diminish. At length I saw before me a house evidently Italianised. Three arched and narrow windows were seen, over an arch yet larger, spanning the path. There was a foreign and classical air thus given to the building impossible to be mistaken. Here and there towards the boundary of this delightful floral assemblage, as if in the way of contrast, broad and green, leaped fig trees, set off by their density of colour. Passing under the arch already mentioned, the garden was again continued as brilliant as before. Rich perfumes rose on every side. The disposition of this garden bore no appearance of art—no formality. The path through such a wilderness of sweets terminated in a dark grotto rather abruptly descending, having on the right of the entrance a small pool of water that nourished aquatic plants.

In a moment the scene altered from the most beautiful of floral assemblages to the subdued light within a subterranean excavation. A change succeeded in another moment by emerging, after a short passage through the grotto, upon a surface bearing no sort of resemblance to that which had preceded. On the right appeared a stone wall, at the foot of which was planted a variety of odoriferous shrubs in a border, bounded by a wall of no great breadth. Outside this an extensive field, covered with short mountain turf, presented itself, on which a few sheep were browsing. These were kept from trespassing on the border by a rough wooden fence. Glancing in a western direction across the turf, unrelieved by a single flower, the eye just became sensible of the elevation or table land, far above the neighbouring hills, the summits of which were seen undulating into the far distance—sinking into the gray tint so distinctive of intervening space.

“But what was in front across the road, at the distance of a few hundred yards? What but a beautiful shrubbery, the mass in every shade of green, here and there interspersed with flower or berry bearing trees. Over this irregular line of verdure rose the lofty tower, the exquisite well-proportioned column appearing to wonderful advantage. Shortly, on approaching near the shrubbery, the tower that produced an effect so magical as to attract the vision from every other

object, wholly disappeared. I was too much enchanted to think of retracing my steps. Every quarter of the globe seemed to have been ransacked in order to extend the variety of the vegetative kingdom flourishing here. Rock roses of the sunny south were abundant. The Alpine schistus bordered upon bushes of sweet briar in native wildness. The libertine honeysuckle spread its slender branches, entwining amidst and over all in great luxuriance of flower and strength of odour. The pinus arborea assumed the character of a tree. Of the pine genus there were rare specimens; the spots selected for the growth of the coniferæ being, when necessary, carefully sheltered or secluded. The Brazils, the Himalaya, Mexico, and Scotland alike contributed to adorn this sequestered and delightful shrubbery, in which too, patches of dark yew might be seen waving their gloomy boughs in melancholy stateliness. Advantage was taken of every nook where ornament could be introduced without destroying the broader masses or exhibiting marks of care or cultivation, evidently the effect of consummate taste united with experienced judgment. There was a repose and harmony over all bewitchingly attractive.

“I lingered as if I was spell-bound in some magic garden of the warm East—some dreamy spot that Arabian imaginativeness had created for the hero of one of those immortal stories, which none but the fancies of those who revel in

the glories of happy climes can embody. In shady places, among stones, and where the roughness of the ground demanded concealment, there grew many varieties of fern. In one spot *Osmandi Regale* waved its palmy foliage over beds of *antirrhinum* and carpets of wild thyme, alternated with common turf. Many of the trees and shrubs presented an aspect completely novel in their forms and foliage, imparting a foreign appearance to the umbrage. Placing myself upon a stone seat, I began to imagine myself in a distant land, in some Damascene garden, especially as my solitude continued unbroken, except by the sweet harmony of an infinite variety of birds that made the thickets a favourite retreat, if their mellifluous notes were any criterion of their regard for the locality; a thrush seemed to undo the utmost efforts of his brother tenants of the air, making the charming spot vocal with the richest tones of nature's music.

"I continued my walk amid hope, fear, and delight, each alternately present in my mind. I wound along the paths; I imagined a hundred strange day dreams; continually halting at new beauties of vegetative growth. The sunny warmth, the odours on every side, the silence, the deep shadows and the air of adventure, withal, prepared the mind for Orientalism and magic. Nor was this impression diminished when, coming suddenly upon an open space, silent, solitary, yet green and beautiful, as a place of

death should ever be, I found in a leafy recess on one side a *sarcophagus* of rose-coloured granite.

“This receptacle for the dead was eight or nine feet long, nearly six high, and polished up to the brilliancy of a looking-glass.* ‘Doubtless the tomb of the genius of the place’ thought I, ‘If a genius may die.’ How beautiful a bed of repose in so elevated a spot! Amid such a scene of human ashes we watch by the shadowy principle that once animated them with the power of memory and judgment, it must be the most pleasant of duties, until time has wrought manifold transmutation into unrecognisable atoms, when the spirit no longer able to trace its ancient habitation, wings its final flight to other orbs. Here is a sepulchre worthy the proudest monarch—fit to consume the fleshless forms of pre-Adamite kings. Never to my mind was a more delightful place than the gardens and surroundings of Lansdown Tower. Surely, thought I, it is something to enjoy the labours of great souls in such a spot as this. The least perishable of mental productions should be tasted where they can be most relished.

“I was not yet satisfied with what I had seen. ‘Things out of hope are often compassed with venturing,’ but I stole into the library of the tower before saying adieu to this scene of

* This tomb, in which are enclosed the remains of Mr. Beckford, and which may now be seen any day at Lansdown Cemetery, cost him upwards of £700.



BECKFORD'S TOMB, LANSDOWN CEMETERY.

Inscriptions.

"De Dieu Tout."

"William Beckford, Esq.,

"Late of Fonthill, Wilts,

Died 2nd May, 1844,

Aged 84.

"Eternal Power !

Grant me through obvious clouds one transient gleam,
Of Thy bright essence in my dying hour."



LANSDOWN TOWER,
(*The Favourite Resort of Mr. Beckford.*)

Erected in 1827; 130 feet in height.

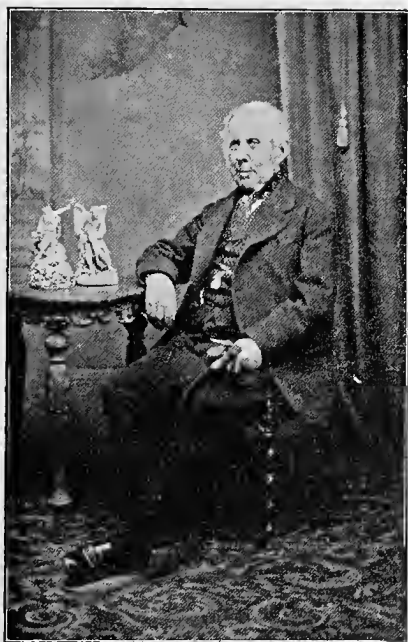
It is said that Mr. Beckford could, by means of a powerful glass, see Fonthill Abbey from the top of this Tower, also steam packets and other ships entering and leaving Bristol Harbour.

enchantment. Taking down a volume in Spanish I began to read in what the author styled 'The Looking-glass of the Soul.' Evidently a monkish production, it was full of matter harrowing to the mind—a mortal in the decay of the grave, conscious of its state and examining its own past frailties. I did not read far. There was something more mild and forgiving about the locality—something impressing me with the belief that the beneficence of the Being that afforded such enjoyment as with every allowance for mortal alloy might be shared here, was not the Being of terror thus represented. I turned to other volumes, that such a solitude could not fail to render productive of more refined associations, tending towards the contemplation of better things than every-day existence affords. I had read but a short time when I heard voices below. My conscience accused me of being on forbidden ground. A guilty conscience needs no accuser but is like a whirlpool drawing in all to itself, which would otherwise pass by. I descended into the entrance-hall; the individual who had the care of the Tower was conversing with the gardener. 'We saw you though you did not see us; we knew from your appearance you were one of the very few who might be permitted to trespass, so we left you to yourself.' And now, courteous reader, I must wish you farewell."

"Having heard of the attractions of Lansdown, I (writes an intelligent observer) resolved

without permission (being in the service of her Majesty) to leave Kew Gardens and see your beautiful city and its surroundings. My old friend the compiler, who is now living in your midst, had opportunities of visiting the Tower many years ago, having written out for his patron, the late Sir Wm. Holburne (about forty years ago), a full description of the various apartments in the Tower, with their contents, which he will give you in a forthcoming chapter.

“Lansdown Tower was built by the late Mr. Goodridge, an eminent architect of Bath, in 1827, from designs arranged in accordance with the classic taste of the owner uniting symmetry with beauties of no common order. This beacon for strangers is visible for some miles before entering Bath on the Bristol and Gloucester roads, and is of square form. Proceeding towards the entrance after ascending two or three steps is a sort of entrance-hall, on opening a door on the left was a room in which the prevailing colour was scarlet, a second door, with arched panels of plate-glass, led to the stairs. In this, the hall of entrance, was a small recess on the right hand in which stood a pillar-table of Sienna marble. This table bore three Etruscan vases, and behind them was a mirror in three compartments, having semi-circular tops answering in form to the windows elsewhere. The ceiling border of wainscot was ornamented with gilt cornices. The parallel rafters or beams had their intermediate ceilings



THE LATE SIR WM. HOLBURNE, BART.

A great connoisseur in paintings, antique gold and silver plate. His splendid collection, richly endowed, has since his death been presented to the City of Bath, and is at present placed in a house in Charlotte Street (near the Victoria Park) and is known as the Holburne Museum.

decorated with red panelling at once tasteful and magnificent. Glazed cabinets contained many articles precious and rare arranged with consummate taste. A vase here, almost unique, bore over a ground powdered with gold the representation of a black and bearded Bacchus.* Here was a bronze bust of Caligula having silver eyes. This was once the property of Horace Walpole, and came from Strawberry-hill. It was found at Herculanæum. This bust was supposed to bear a likeness of the Emperor—the workmanship was exquisite. It was once the property of Prince Elbœuf, among whose effects it was sold at Florence. In the apartment on the right of entrance a rich and almost dazzling effect arose from the predominance of scarlet in everything attached to this room. The walls, hangings, full draperies, carpet, were of this colour and black. The arrangement was admirable. Everything to the minutest bit of pearl, engraved crystal, Japan work, and statuary being in the best possible place. The effect was like the regalia of the altar in a place of Catholic worship. The ornaments appeared under a spell which the vulgar habit or touch would dissolve.

“Over the mantelpiece was a picture by the noted Hondokoeter, the principal object in which was a splendid game cock in the full glory of his

*Most of the choice treasures were brought to Lansdown Tower from Fonthill.

plumage, bright and glossy as nature itself, and of the purest scarlet. It was as if everything in the room was coloured after this beautiful creature into one general harmony of hue. Between the beams of the ceiling the panel work was scarlet with a relief of purple and gold. Yet there was nothing that was tawdry ; all was kept down and subdued into a uniform glow of overpowering elegance, which in no one instance appeared to have been trespassed upon. The fireplace was composed of Brocatelli marble. Under a window opposite was a large table of Egyptian marble, bearing an ivory vase lined with crystal and filled with the richest and freshest of flowers, from among which long pendant sprays of jessamine, sweetbriar, and wild roses, set off by their dark green hues, the richer colours with which they were intermingled, filling the room with the freshest fragrance.*

On the chimney-piece were two lizard bottles of the rarest kind, seagreen in colour, also some Oriental cups with ornaments on a scarlet ground mostly of gold with which they were lined. Some of the enamels were wonderfully well executed, among them were large dishes of the most costly workmanship. Vases of Italian porphyry, verte antique, Egyptian granite, and Sienna marble here met the view, with carved

* When Mr. Beckford was at home it was one of his greatest pleasures to arrange personally the flowers and foliage in this vase.

oak coffers containing specimens of rare Japan, elaborately inlaid with corals and pure gold. There was also a tripod under the western window, supporting a slab of Lumachelle from the Himalaya mountains. There was no confusion from the too great multiplication of similar objects—there was enough and no more. Nothing could be more judicious and tasteful than the arrangement—nothing more approaching the faultless.

Among the pictures was a very pleasing landscape, by John Both ; an admirable portrait of a Doge of Venice, by Giovanni Bellini ; a landscape, by Cemaroli ; *The Thistle*, a landscape by Wynants ; *The Triumph of the Gods*, by Franken ; *The Tower of Babel*, and a landscape by West.

Over the mantel-piece hung two fine enamels, and a Greek legendary painting of great antiquity, divided into three compartments. In addition to these was a small Breughal of beautiful execution.

The door leading to the stairs served as an entrance to all the other parts of the tower. Ascending to the upper floor was a noble vase of polished granite having bronze ornamented cornices and four lion's heads protruding from as many openings or cells in the base. Large, elegant, and singularly well placed, this was a very striking object both as a specimen of art and a beautiful ornament.

A door on the left hand conducted into a room

hung with crimson. The hangings, draperies, carpets and walls, were also of crimson. The ceiling purple and crimson, with gold panelling. Against the southern side stood an ebony cabinet of exquisite workmanship, the top a precious slab of green porphyry. This cabinet contained specimens of rare Japan. A coffer here once belonged to the noted Cardinal Mazarin ; it was placed upon a table of Florentine mosaic exceedingly beautiful. All the tables were made of valuable Italian marble, made after the most classical designs. Several of the candelabra were of polished granite. On every side were cases of rare china, jasper, chalcedony, agate, cornelian, brocatelli, and similar rare or curious substances, many exquisitely formed and sculptured elaborately. Here were hanging cabinets containing books and vases, here was a curious Venetian vase of glass of considerable antiquity. It was enamelled and gilt with figures of knights and combats of chivalry, exciting surprise at the freshness and splendour of its illuminations. Artists must have examined it with wonder. The legend it represented was incomprehensible to the unlearned and a puzzle to those who might hereafter attempt to explain the subject. The bare preservation of such a relic, considering the fragile material of which it was made, did not seem the least singularity attached to it. The glass appeared thin and incapable of sustaining even the smallest degree of violence.

There were a pair of candlesticks from the Alhambra, with pyramidical bases, bearing all over their surfaces every kind of arabesque ornament, with an infinity of scrolls and intersecting lines, producing a very rich effect. Another pair of candlesticks here were made of the purest gold, executed by Vuliamay after a design of Holbein. An enamelled salver by Jean Cousin, after Raffaele, representing a feast of the gods from the Farnesini ; above all, the small but celebrated bronze of John of Bologna, representing a centaur carrying off a female, were among the more striking and precious ornaments of this remarkable room. A fine St. John, by Murillo ; a battle piece, by Bourgonone ; the interior of a Church, by Antony de L'Orme, the figures by Palamedes ; two paintings of Peter Neefs ; the interior of a Church, by Steinwick ; two sweet Italian landscapes, by Herman Swaneveldt, sometimes called the Hermit of Italy, the scholar of Claude Lorrain ; the interior of a Palace Saloon, by Bassano ; a head, by Albert Durer ; Tobias and the Angel, by Elshemer ; and several other choice paintings were here.

A door in one corner of this room led into a closet having a coved ceiling, the window trellised, and the framework gilded. This delightful little retreat was filled with valuable books, beneath which were costly articles in cabinets, so as to leave no space unoccupied.

A room adjoining the former, long and narrow,

was devoted exclusively to the purpose of a library, and literally lined with books. To lovers of rare old books this was truly a place in which a man might take up an everlasting rest.*

“Worthy books

Are not companions—they are solitudes,

We lose ourselves in them, and all our cares.”

The volumes were arranged with great care, so that every advantage was taken of the space. Each book filled its place exactly and closely in the most symmetrical order. Some were in very expensive bindings, many bound in white vellum and gold with appropriate devices, others in every shade of Morocco, a goodly number of which was highly embellished. Illuminated missals and psalters of regal costliness were not wanting. Some of these contained miniatures by Giulio Clovio, others were gem-clasped and bound in tortoise-shell. Miniature landscapes, flowers and figures, copied from ancient artists and beautiful beyond conception, were to be seen in these volumes. Here were illustrations from the

* “Except a living man there is nothing more wonderful than a book; a message to us from the dead—from human souls we never saw, who lived perhaps thousands of miles away, and yet these, in those little sheets of paper, speak to us, amuse us, terrify us, teach us, comfort us, open their hearts to us as brothers. . . . I say we ought to reverence books, to look at them as useful and mighty things. If they are good and true, whether they are about religion and politics, farming, trade, or medicine, they are heavenly messengers proceeding from the Author of all truth.”—KINGSLEY.

Lord's Prayer, of the Acts of the Apostles, and of the Old Testament, with many original drawings by artists of celebrity.

Nor were there wanting manuscripts of various kinds, particularly Persian, Chinese printed columns in the language of Confucius, Oriental tablets, and rarest of all books in Japanese, exceedingly curious. Over the tops of the bookcases were tazzas of precious marbles, with Etruscan vases; some of these last among those most prized, from being painted on a white ground. Above all, the ceiling shone conspicuous, in gold, purple and scarlet between wainscot beams. This wood, plain and gilded, was used throughout with a neat and uncommon pleasing effect. The library was approached by a lobby, into which the light was introduced through the roof in a soft, subdued tone, falling upon an antique bronze bust.

That in so small a space so much of elegance and splendour could be introduced was a matter of surprise. Then we come to an apartment devoted to religious uses. Here the light, admitted through dim cupolas of ground glass, was remarkably subdued and soft, producing a very solemn effect as it fell upon a full length figure of St. Anthony, with the infant Saviour smiling in his arms, by Rossi. The marble of yellowish hue was, by the restrained light, seen to great advantage. Nothing was wanting to produce the full effect of one of those little

chapels seen branching from the dim aisles of a vast Catholic Cathedral, but lighted tapers on each side of the pedestal of the image. This pedestal was of Sienna marble, standing in a niche pannelled with Egyptian porphyry and Mosaic work, having a border of Giallo Antico, and other marbles; it bore the inscription "Dominus Illuminatio mea." That apartments thus fitted up do prepare the mind for the solemn and affecting duties of religion, there cannot be the smallest doubt. The mysterious light thus diffused by art scatters all the intruding feelings of levity, and acts continually as a memento that a befitting spirit must accompany the act of devotion, and that for a few moments at least this world and its associations must give place to the contemplation of one with which the sense is unacquainted, and of which the mind can only image the shadowy outline.

Beneath the cupola were three beautiful semi-circular pictures representing the "Temptation in the Wilderness," "The Annunciation," and "Christ's Agony in the Garden," painted by Mr. Willes Maddox,* a celebrated Bath artist, who spent some time in Italy, which country he visited to study art in its noblest achievements.

These paintings were the last fixed in this room, denominated "The Sanctuary." Besides

* Mr. Maddox was a native of Bath; his father was formerly a respectable tradesman in this city.



THE GRENVILLE MONUMENT.

This Monument which is erected at the extreme end of Lansdown (nearly two miles distant from the Beckford Monument), was raised to celebrate the battle between the Royalists and Parliamentarians which occurred July 5th, 1643. It is erected on the spot where the engagement took place—close to an estate called "Battlefields," lately purchased by the late Sir Robert Stickney Blaine, ex-Mayor of Bath.

these there was a Virgin and Child in the style of Raffaele; the interior of a Cathedral, by Steinwick; three enamels upon sacred subjects and the entombment, and cabinets containing books on sacred literature. Other appropriate articles are placed at the sides of this apartment. After leaving the sanctuary and ascending the carpeted stairs, after climbing a pretty long ascent, you entered a square room, the drapery of which was orange coloured. The long arched windows of plate-glass in each front disclosed one of the noblest views on which the eye could expatiate—at a vast distance the horizon view terminates in the blue mountains of Wales. In another direction you can see the sea sparkling and flashing in the sunbeams, here and there carrying a white sail, a mere speck in the far-off part of the landscape. Hamlets, villas, cottages, an almost endless variety of objects basking in light, or reposing in mild shadow strikes the sight with unwonted astonishment. On the north, as before chronicled, a dreary plain, the scene of a bloody combat, marked by the monument of a fallen chief,* stretches away in gloomy monotony. To change from window to window, shifting the scene and returning to where the eye set out, the spectator may well be reminded of Sergeant Talfourd's words, "We are charmed; not awe struck; for the beautiful is here—

* Sir Bevil Granville : see Battle of Lansdown in Wood's History of Bath or in Clarendon's History of the Rebellion.

triumphant." A central staircase from this elevated room, which was denominated the Belvedere, leads still higher into the lantern of cast iron. Here the openings through the ornamental foliage of the frieze being filled with plate-glass, gave a still more extensive view than can be obtained in the room beneath, though not with the same convenience of easy seats that formerly were placed in the room below for careless lounging after the toil of the ascent.

Everything connected with the edifice was in the southern taste, strictly Italian.* Nothing Oriental or Moorish could be traced in the design. Everything necessary in the way of use was rendered conducive to ornament. The trellis work of the windows, made of iron, designed to resist the attempts of depredators,† was of the most agreeable pattern, and in many cases gilded. There was no showy gewgaws, no multiplication of ornament to overdoing. At

* Lansdown Tower, royal folio, with beautiful coloured illustrations of the various apartments, by Willes Maddox, made under Mr. Beckford's own inspection.

† Some few years previous to Mr. Beckford's decease a desperate attempt was made by some *ART-ful* miscreants to violate the sanctity of the tower. Possibly these vagabonds may have felt a desire to view a Madonna by Moonlight, or what is more than probable, wished to examine in the quiet and seclusion of their own domiciles the substance and character of a portion of the gold and precious gems that were in the apartments. But the over-curious are not always wise. The bolts and bars proved too mighty an obstacle. Though great efforts were exerted the strength of the workmanship resisted the

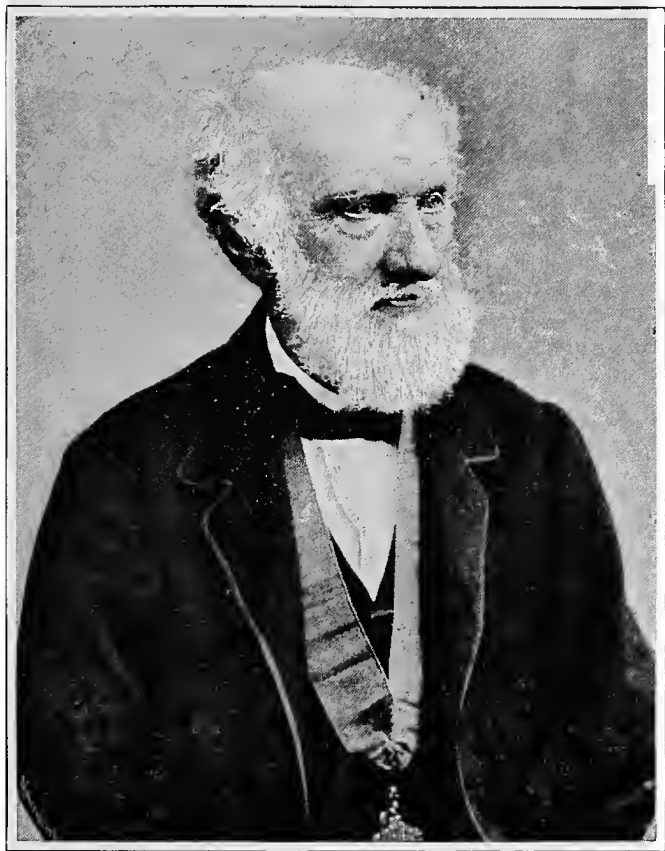
such an elevation the rush of the wind when high, or its soft sighing as it sweeps by the tower on a quiet balmy day, seems to solicit thoughtfulness. At the present time to look down upon the sacred dust of so many of our illustrious fellow-citizens who have so often conversed with us, and whose remains are interred in the sod beneath, surely is well calculated to suggest whisperings of joy or sorrow—and to revive scenes of bygone times.

thieves so long that they were forced to decamp without obtaining their end. The intelligence was communicated to Mr. Beckford by the Architect, who was somewhat flurried as he gave the information. The observation in reply was characteristic of the owner who, early in the morning, was throwing bread to a brood of turkeys at the back of his house in Lansdown Crescent, "The tower has been broken into by thieves, sir." "Have they carried off anything—is much injury done?" inquired Mr. Beckford, calmly. "There is nothing gone," was the reply, "but they have done great injury to the building, they very nearly attained their object." "Mr. G——, Mr. G——, don't be so excited. Don't show so much emotion. Where will you and I and the tower be in a few years? A hundred pounds will set all right again, I dare say—don't be excited."

CHAPTER X.

THE LATE SIR J. MURCH'S REMINISCENCES.

THE late Sir J. Murch, in his work "Local Celebrities," describes a visit he paid to Lansdown Tower on the invitation of Mr. Beckford. I was (he says) a little disappointed in the plantations around the tower, although if I had known the hill before they were made I might have had a different feeling. A dull, flat piece of ground, open to the west wind; nothing but a careful selection of trees would have made it interesting or answered the owner's purpose. But the building and its contents were well worth many a visit, showing the most exquisite taste in all respects, as well as the most thorough provision for intellectual enjoyment. It is pleasant to remember the various rooms; some full of books; others of vases, pictures, and cabinets; everything in the best Italian style, harmonising with the architecture. There was a room called the chapel; bouquets of the loveliest flowers were on the tables, a few choice pictures adorned the walls, while upon a pedestal of Sienna marble, in



SIR JEROM MURCH.

Seven times Mayor of Bath.

Died May 13, 1895 ; aged 87 years.

He resided many years at Crauwells, Weston, and was interred
at the Unitarian Cemetery, Lyncombe Vale.

a niche panelled with Egyptian porphyry and lighted by a dim cupola, was a delicate piece of sculpture, S. Anthony with the infant Saviour in his arms, and the Oxford motto, "Dominus Illuminatio Dea." All this is gone; no trace remains within the building of what the owner did; but the view from the top is still as glorious as when he enjoyed it; reaching to Fonthill in one direction, and the Welsh mountains in another; the waves of the Severn, some fifteen miles off, sparkling when the sun shone, and the Granville monument close by telling its tale of the Great Rebellion; all as if to show how enduring nature is, how evanescent the work of man.

In my conversations with Mr. Beckford he was by no means reticent on topics mutually interesting. From the work of planting and landscape gardening we were led to authors on such subjects and thence to other paths of literature. He mentioned the kind of books I should find at the tower, and on my first visit I made myself acquainted to some extent with their general character. Although not numerous they were rare and elegant; binding, paper and type vying with the contents. Spanish and Portuguese books abounded; of French authors there were some choice specimens; and I wondered what many an English Divine would have thought of the theology in all languages. A writer in the *Times*, after relating how Mr. Beckford's books "followed him from Fonthill to Bath," and how

they crowded every room of his house, none but the owner knowing where to find them, adds "but *he* always knew; his memory was as wonderful as his judgment, and he was a buyer till he died." The book he was then reading was *Wiseman's Lectures on Natural and Revealed Religion*. It was open on the table at which I sat, and had marginal notes in Mr. Beckford's writing on almost every page. This was the habit of his life. At the sale of Fonthill, in 1823, large prices were obtained for books thus enriched. And at the Hamilton sale in London, a volume of Beckfordiana, being a transcript of the various notes on margins and flyleaves in his library, sold for £156. To all book collectors the interest was so great that every work was examined with a view to the discovery of manuscript notes, and any that contained them sold for as many pounds as, if unannotated, they would have produced shillings.

It has been said that with all Mr. Beckford's lavish expenditure he was not a bad man of business. To what extent this is true of the general management of his property, either English or West Indian, we have few means of judging. With regard to works of art, whatever he did was marked by great decision; he would not haggle with others, nor would he allow others to haggle with him. That he knew the real value of things may be fairly inferred by his great knowledge and experience; that he did not

hesitate to make a fair profit, especially when he parted with anything he prized, was well-known. His *Letters on Italy* he sold to Mr. Bentley, the bookseller, for £500, £400 in cash and the remainder in a bill. The bill he passed to his agent; the cash he invested in a sweet picture by Gerard Dow; but soon, not liking the high finish, he sold it for £500. His biographer states that the National Gallery paid him £800 for a Perugino which only cost him 50 guineas. More than forty years ago I received a call from the Marquis of Lansdowne, who told me he had come to Bath on behalf of the Government to see some pictures in Mr. Beckford's collection. He had in view more particularly the S. Catherine, by Raphael, and the Doge of Venice, by Bellini. There was this remarkable circumstance: the owner had no other specimen by the same masters; the National Gallery was without one of either. No one, therefore, would blame Mr. Beckford for asking from the Government much larger sums than he gave; and they were given without any of the long negotiations he disliked. Knowing now as we do the increased value of such works, there is no doubt that the Government, on this occasion, made a good investment.

Speaking of Mr. Beckford's triple residences in Lansdown Crescent, Sir Jerom adds:—He made openings in the walls of the drawing-room storey which showed a fine vista extending the entire length of the three houses and the arch.

The grandeur of these rooms, quiet as it was, contrasted with the simplicity of others for his private use, especially his bedroom, with its little narrow uncurtained bed, reminding one of the Duke of Wellington's answer at Apsley House with regard to his own; on hearing the remark that there was no room to turn, he said, "Turn, turn, when one wants to turn, it is time to turn out." Another contrast was of a different kind but not less striking. It was the ugly dwarf, Pero, stationed in the vestibule of the house with no apparent duty whatever. The visitors were admitted by the hall porter and passed on to a servant in the interior, while this wretched looking object sat in his armchair grinning. One explanation of the incongruity was that Mr. Beckford's taste was in many respects Oriental, and that he liked to perpetuate as much as possible the customs of feudal times and ancient families. Among the strange characters in *Vathek* is the dwarf Bababalouk, a combination of Caliban and Sancho Panza, if such can be imagined, uniting immense conceit with a hideousness of person less than human.

FACSIMILE OF MR. BECKFORD'S HAND WRITING
(REDUCED).

Monday Evening —
21 Decr.

The little book gallery may be
moved as proposed, but I shall
defer performing that operation upon
the dining parlour till another
Season, so that the Mothers may
enjoy themselves to next April &
come forth in hundreds or tens of
hundreds if they please. —

To tell you the truth, I am
rather afraid of the lumpy effect
of so much scarlet en masse —
I do not wish to change the
hangings, till I have fixed upon
a colour more to my mind —

I am ever
with true regard
most sincerely &

M^r. Edm. English Jun^r. cordially &c
Milsom Street
Bath
William Beckford

CHAPTER XI.

DEATH AND FUNERAL OF MR. BECKFORD.

BECKFORD'S Tower still stands, but its creator is no more. The bouquets of flowers he daily, before his breakfast hour, placed in the ground apartment have faded for ever. The tower remains a monument of a mind gifted with acquirements of a rare character and variety ; a genius, sublime, meditative, retiring, proud, seeking among invisible things those which the visible could not unfold, still acquiring knowledge in the bosom of the solitude congenial to his temper, even after octogenarian years. Bath citizens will ever regard this beautiful object with delight ; the man of letters will renew his wonder at the extent of the founder's acquirements, and the artist will admire the purity of his taste. Certainly wealth might have been lavished upon objects less elevating to the dignity of humanity.

One of the last events of a gratifying nature in his history was the union of his daughter's son, the Marquis of Douglas, to a sovereign house of

Germany, Mary of Baden. Such an alliance must have been extremely pleasing to one who had so keen a relish for ancestral honours.

After upwards of sixty years of mature life spent in unlimited indulgence of the highest intellectual tastes, this singular man meets the common fate ; suggesting the verse of Gray—

“The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e’er gave,
Await alike the inevitable hour ;
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.”

Mr. Beckford struggled manfully at first against the fever which carried him off, arising from a cold caught after overwalking himself in a chill easterly wind. When he saw that the struggle was vain, not before, and that the last of life was approaching, he wrote to his affectionate daughter in town his last laconic note—“Come—quick—quick,” and expired a day or two after the Duchess’s arrival with perfect resignation, so tranquilly that his passing moment was hardly perceptible.

The following is extracted from the *Bath Chronicle* and *Keene’s Bath Journal* of May, 1844:—

“Mr. Beckford, at an early period of his life, was M.P. for Wells, and afterwards for the borough of Hindon several times, but for more than forty years he had relinquished parliamentary honours and other public duties, devoting himself to retirement but not unprofit-

ably. His highly cultivated and ever active mind to the latest period of life directed his splendid fortune to the encouragement of literature and the arts. In this respect the whole nation has felt the influence of his judgment, and genius has been fostered by his encouragement and rewarded by his patronage and the sanction of his approval. His literary productions are few but of the highest character for classical elegance of diction, for truth of feeling, scope of observation, and power of invention. His remains will be deposited in the new cemetery at Widcombe on Thursday next. The mausoleum constructed at Lansdown Tower is to be removed thither for their reception. He directed by his will that his body should be embalmed. This process has just been completed by Messrs. English and Hiscox, surgeons, of Bath. It was intended that Mr. Beckford's remains should have been deposited in Salisbury Cathedral, but the Dean objected to the body being placed in a mausoleum above ground. Another proposition was that the body should be first placed in the Walcot Cemetery and then removed by a faculty to Lansdown Tower, where we understand Mr. Beckford wished to be buried. This, however, was not practicable, as no faculty can be granted for the removal of a body from consecrated ground to that which is not consecrated. The funeral was characterised by an imposing and costly grandeur comporting with the affluence of

the deceased. The coffin was exhibited to the public during Friday at All Saints' Church, where it had been taken from the premises of Messrs. English. It was removed to the house on the same evening for the purpose of receiving the remains of the deceased. Great numbers of persons were admitted to the Cemetery for several days preceding that of the funeral, and towards the last public curiosity for inspecting the tomb continued to increase intensely. During the morning of Saturday the solemn knell from all the churches announced the approaching event. The procession moved from Lansdown Crescent about half-past eleven o'clock, and consisted of ten mourning and nine other carriages. The hearse was preceded by two mourning coaches, the first containing the Rev. S. H. Widdrington, rector of Walcot, and the Rev. T. Lathbury. After the hearse came the coaches containing the noble and distinguished relatives of the deceased as chief mourners, who comprised the Duke and Duchess of Hamilton, Lady Lincoln, the Marquis of Douglas, the Marquis of Huntly, Earl Dunmore, and the Hon. Charles and Captain H. Murray. The remaining coaches were occupied by other attendants. Then followed the carriage of the deceased and those of the Duke and Duchess, while the rear was brought up by a long line of private carriages, among which were those of Colonel Andrews, Capt. G. Blathwayt, Admiral Lysaght,

the Rector of Walcot, Mr. J. Worthington, Dr. Whetten, and Dr. Bowie. The procession took the route of Lansdown Road, Belvedere, Milsom Street, New Bond Street, Pulteney Street, and Road to the Cemetery.

“So great was the public interest excited by the sombre scene that the footways in the thoroughfares through which the funeral passed were thronged excessively, and the concourse assembled in the Crescent and its vicinity to witness the departure was immense. The arrival at the Cemetery was about half-past 12 o'clock. Here the crowd congregated previously was much augmented by the numbers of people who came with the procession. A strong body of the police force, under the able direction of Captain Carroll, were in attendance to prevent everything disorderly on the ground and to keep the paths clear for the approach of the mourners and attendants to the tomb. The avenues to the chapel were kept clear and becoming order was observed throughout the solemn proceedings. The coffin having been borne from the hearse from the carriage road to the chapel, the funeral service was read by the Rev. S. H. Widdrington, who also finished the solemnities at the tomb. The body was then deposited in the tomb, having been a long time constructed and in a small circular spot of ground immediately in front of the Chapel of the Cemetery. The coffin was of a superb and

costly description. It was beautifully made of Spanish mahogany, embellished with superior mouldings and covered with purple Genoa velvet of the purest fabric. The gilded metal ornaments even to the nails were all moulded and cast expressly for the purpose and of a massive and rich appearance. The cover of the coffin was divided into three compartments, the first or head part taking a shield with an inscription; in the centre was a gilded electrotype coat of arms in bold relief on a rich marble surmounted by a crest. The foot compartment also contained a crest. The sides were adorned with Latimer crosses and cinque foils alternately disposed, and the massive handles bore each a shield with arms in the centre.

“Thus closed the tomb upon a man of many and extraordinary claims on public attention. His life, far beyond the average duration, had been one of comparative retirement from the world—of complete retirement from all its ordinary vanities, and of too much, perhaps, from social converse; but devoted to those pursuits and pleasures which extend their influence to the arts and sciences, to literature, and to trade, calling talent and industry into requisition, and returning them their due reward. Mr. Beckford was a man of the most refined taste; of knowledge, in the best sense of the word, *recherché*; of a liberal fortune and an equally liberal disposition to answer every suggestion to harmonise all

things about him into unity of elegance and completeness of domestic comfort. Men of fortune too frequently pursue their own pleasures unmindful of others and in luxurious waste, their lives pass away as 'a tale that is told. Every pleasure of Mr. Beckford was of a rational and refined character, such as dignifies human nature, and excites the mental energies of others to satisfy its requirements. It would be difficult, indeed, to conceive the extent to which the more noble and useful faculties would be called into exercise were all men like him. The man of fortune will be a gentleman by reputation, but if this title means anything of solid worth, it means not merely the advantage of riches, but superiority of intellectual acquisitions. In proportion as these attain supremacy, wealth is directed to its noblest purposes; genius receives its spur to exertion; and the world makes honourable advancement. The life of Mr. Beckford in this point of view presents many distinguished features worthy of general imitation."

CHAPTER XII.

SALE OF LANSDOWN TOWER AND ITS CONTENTS.

HE first public intimation of the disposal of Lansdown Tower and its surroundings was given September 8th, 1845, as follows:—"This splendid structure, with its surrounding grounds, is about to be submitted to public competition by Messrs. English and Son. This will be the most interesting sale that has taken place in the city of Bath for many years. The sale will doubtless be looked forward to with exciting interest and attract visitors from all parts of the kingdom."

The next week the following advertisement appeared in the *Bath Journal* :—

LANSDOWN CRESCENT, BATH;
With its Unrivalled Contents and various Freeholds of the late WILLIAM BECKFORD, Esq., in the vicinity of his residence, including Costly Plantations, Gardens, and other Property.

MESSRS. ENGLISH & SON

Have the honour very respectfully to make known to the Nobility, Gentry, and Public that they have been directed by the Executors of the

late William Beckford, Esq., of Lansdown Crescent, Bath, to offer for

PUBLIC COMPETITION,

Early in November Next, at the Tower on Lansdown, that exquisite monument of its late owner's taste, together with various parcels of Freehold Land, upon the summit and slope of the celebrated eminence upon which that most beautiful edifice rears its commanding elevation.

The spot was decorated with lavish expense by the late

WILLIAM BECKFORD, ESQ.,

Whose correctness of taste exhibited here during the later years of his life only confirmed the rare accuracy of that judgment the fame of which, connected with his former residence at Fonthill, had spread over all the civilized world.

LANSDOWN TOWER,

With its chaste ornamental Gardens and Grounds, consisting of between Six and Seven Acres of Land, is situated about two miles from Bath, upon the summit of Lansdown, its base being 800 feet above the Avon. The structure itself rises 130 feet higher, crowned with an elegant cupola and lantern of cast-iron in strict Grecian character, commanding a prospect the very perfection of picturesque landscape; the view bounded in one direction by the mountains of Wales commands the counties of Somerset, Wilts, Gloucester, and Worcester, and, across the

Severn, Glamorgan, and Monmouth; smiling vales, and emerald-coloured hills are spread beneath like a carpet of unparalleled richness.

The Tower, with its symmetrical apartments, refreshed and newly furnished but just before the owner's decease, would form an admirable basis "or Wing" for a Private Residence, being singularly well adapted for the retirement of a man of fortune and pure taste, who would not desire to be too far away from the occasional attractions of a splendid city. The surrounding Garden, that may be said

TO MAKE PERFECTION PERFECT,

Is planted with the choicest trees, capable of being acclimated to such a spot; collected from all parts of the world without any regard to cost, and remarkably rich in the tribe Coniferæ, to which (besides the British Isles) Mexico, the Brazils, and even the Himalayas have been made tributary. It may be pronounced justly that in all England nothing of the same compass

OUTVIES THIS MATCHLESS SPOT.

The Tower, Garden, and Grounds, extended by a terrace walk to what is called the Tunnel, at which the Dike Garden commences, Messrs. English will have the honour to offer to the Public separately.

ONE OF THE RAREST AND MOST COSTLY
COLLECTIONS OF VERTU,

Forming the contents of the Tower, will follow

next in the order of sale consisting of Furniture, adapted with great care to the character of the building, Paintings, by ancient and modern masters, quantities of matchless China, rich Japan, Etruscan vases, rare marbles, specimens of Sculpture, Bronzes of exquisite workmanship, Agate Cups, Mosaic Cabinets, rich Tables, Ivory Carvings, valuable Crystals, and expensive rarities, adorning this most beautiful of all the studies of meditative genius, and every way

WORTHY OF THE AUTHOR OF VATHEK.

To expatiate upon the value or interest attached to these objects of vertu, accumulated by Mr. Beckford, by a diffuse expenditure of wealth with the advantage of an unusually long term of existence and discriminating talent, would be useless. Suffice it to say that here, to the individual taste,

NOTHING IS LEFT TO BE DESIRED.

The next parcel of Freehold runs parallel with the turnpike-road and extends nearly as far down the hill as the Hare and Hounds Inn. It is entered at present by the tunnel from the Tower ground, and is known by the name of

THE DIKE GARDEN.

Leaving the terrace walk and passing through the tunnel the scene changes from open to circumscribed land, forming a perfect enclosure, in which there stands a cottage, Italianised. There

is also a pond of water, with fruit trees, shrubs, and flowers in profusion, the whole in the most complete privacy. This garden is exceedingly well adapted under its existing purpose for the

SITE OF A RETIRED VILLA.

This will be disposed of separately, and is well worthy of attention from the extreme healthiness of the situation and the noble views in its vicinity.

The next object for public competition is a piece of land on the brow of the hill, descending from the Down towards Bath, in quantity about six acres and a-half, adjoining the turnpike-road, having an ample supply of water,*

ADMIRABLY ADAPTED FOR BUILDING,

And commanding views of uncommon beauty and extent, facing the genial south, surrounded with the most exhilarating objects, and admitting the display of the liveliest fancy in the decoration of its elevated slopes and salubrious undulations, and which will be sold either entire or in lots. After this

A RUSTIC COTTAGE,

Near the Hare and Hounds, with a Paddock on the other side of the road, having a frontage

* Sept. 19, 1846. A portion of this land, formerly the property of Mr. Beckford, was purchased and the new Wesleyan College, designed by Messrs. Wilson, was erected upon it.

of about 740 feet parallel with the road; an object exceedingly desirable as a site for the erection of villas, to which it was formerly appropriated till Mr. Beckford removed the buildings. It possesses the advantage of great plenty of fine stone for building that may be raised on the spot, and a never-failing supply of the purest water. It also commands an extensive prospect of the delightful scenery in the neighbourhood of one of the most picturesque as well as the most beautiful of English cities. After this

THE NOBLE GARDEN AT LANSDOWN CRESCENT
Will be presented, consisting of about four acres, either together or in lots as shall be subsequently announced. It is surrounded with high stone walls, very picturesque in appearance, is stocked with a profusion of the choicest fruit trees, and includes greenhouse, forcing pits, a terrace planted with the finest wall fruit in capital bearing, conducting to a mossy-arched gateway, in the Gothic taste, battlemented and macchicolated. This rich garden is parallel with the rear of Lansdown Crescent, and would be an invaluable property for a resident in that range of spacious and handsome private mansions, or for the several villas in its immediate vicinity.

The Tower and Property there will be submitted to be viewed by Tickets, as early as possible, of which due notice will be given.

The sale commenced on November 20, 1845, and lasted eight days.

1st day—Oriental Egg Shell and Cabinet China.

2nd day—Antique Gems, Coins, Agates, &c., &c.

3rd day—Dresden and Cabinet China.

4th day—The Tower, with its Gardens and Lands adjoining.

5th day—The valuable collection of Paintings.

6th day—The Furniture of the Crimson Drawing-room, with the two precious Etruscan Vases, &c.

7th day—Furniture of the Scarlet Room, &c.

8th day—Furniture of the Sanctuary, Etruscan Library, &c.

Persons were admitted to view on purchase of Catalogues which were sold at five shillings each to admit two persons. All the effects belonging to the Tower, with other property from the Mansion, were removed for sale to Messrs. English's Rooms, 21, Milsom Street.

The purchasers by agency included many museums and some distinguished foreigners. Among these may be enumerated the Grand Duke Constantine of Russia, the King of Bavaria; also the Duke of Beaufort, the Marquis of Lansdowne, the Marquis of Northampton, the Earl of Harrington, Earl de Grey, the Earl of Shrewsbury, Lord Northwick, General Sir W. Davey, C. Maude, Esq., &c., &c.

The Tower with the Gardens produced 8,415 guineas, about one third of the cost. It afterwards transpired that the Tower was bought in, and was again offered for sale by public auction on May 10, 1847, and was knocked down by the auctioneer's hammer, together with an acre of the surrounding land, for the almost nominal sum of £1,000. The purchaser was Mr. Wm. Knott, landlord of the Freemason's Tavern, Abbey Green, in this city.

The following sums were given for some of the paintings, and which were considered at that time extraordinary prices :—View in Venice (Canaletti), 205 guineas ; Poultry in a Landscape (Hondekoeter) 185 guineas ; View of a Dutch Coast (Albert Cuyp), 175 guineas ; Interior of an Apartment decorated with pictures (Ganzales Coques), 155 guineas ; A Rocky and Romantic Landscape (Francesco Mola), 140 guineas ; Interior of a Cathedral (Peter Neefs), 120 guineas ; French Vessel endeavouring to enter a Harbour (Copley Fielding), 115 guineas ; Interior of St. George's Chapel, Windsor, 16 inches by 22, 108 guineas—Allegorical ; The Pursuit of Love (Domenichino), this beautiful little gem, about four inches square, formerly adorned the Aldobrandini Palace, 100 guineas ; The Tower of Babel (Walckenberg), 97 guineas ; Still Life (De Heem and Peters), 88 guineas ; a fine Portrait of Andrea Fendramini, Doge of Venice, 1476 (Giovanni Bellini), 63 guineas. The companion picture of this was

purchased of Mr. Beckford just before his death by Government for £800. The Duke of Hamilton tried to obtain the re-possession of it, but the reply was that Government purchased pictures but did not deal in them. Had the companion picture been re-obtained by his Grace this would not have been sold. It was purchased by Mr. Stothert.

Mr. Beckford's library, together with some of his choicest paintings, was removed to Hamilton Palace. The Duke of Hamilton fitted up at his palace a continuous range from the long state gallery through the old state apartments to the new Beckfordian library and tribune, forming in itself a separate feature. Some five years ago this splendid library of books were sent to London to Messrs. Christie's and disposed of by public auction.

The will of Mr. Beckford (which is very short) was proved at Doctor's Commons, 1844, by the Duchess of Hamilton and Brandon (wife of the Duke of Hamilton) and R. S. White, Esq., solicitor to the deceased. He gave to his daughter, the Duchess of Hamilton, the bulk of his property, leaving £500 to his executor, Mr. White. He also left annuities to servants* and other persons, and desired to be buried in Lansdown Cemetery. The property of Mr.

* May 23, 1848, at Fonthill Gifford, Wilts, Mr. James Vincent, aged 80, a faithful servant of the late Wm. Beckford, Esq., for sixty years.—*Keene's Bath Journal*.

Beckford, once the wealthiest commoner in England, was sworn to as under £80,000.*†

1847, Sept. 4. The Duchess of Hamilton repurchased the beautiful Tower and land from Mr. Knott and presented it for a Cemetery to Walcot parish. This, now consisting of five acres of land, two acres of which were obtained at a nominal value of Major Blathwayt, is a most desirable site for interment. The approach, from designs by Mr. Goodridge, is in the Byzantine style, extended on each side by a wall of the same architecture, surmounted by the richly embellished iron railings which surrounded the tomb in the Abbey Cemetery.

* The following is recorded in an edition of "Vathek" recently published by Messrs. Sampson, Low, and Co.:—"That Alderman Beckford died when his son was eleven years of age, leaving him property which accumulated during his minority to an annual income of one hundred and ten thousand pounds, and this in addition to a million in ready money."

† Mr. Beckford purchased his Lansdown Crescent property of Sir Wm. James, and for which he paid him between seven and eight thousand pounds; the highest price offered at the auction, after all the additions and improvements had been made, was £3,050.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONSECRATION OF LANSDOWN CEMETERY.

HE ceremony of consecrating the beautiful domain of Lansdown Tower and ornamental grounds as a Cemetery was performed on April 25, 1848, by the Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells. Several hundreds of the inhabitants of the city were present at the interesting ceremony. The Duchess of Hamilton, hearing that there was a probability of the Tower and grounds being appropriated for a purpose unworthy of its character, it was repurchased by the Duchess and munificently presented to the Rector of Walcot, to be converted by him into a Cemetery, which was ultimately accepted, and it is at the present time an ornament and credit to the city.

The entrance to the Cemetery is by a noble and elegant archway or porch, in a style suitable to the chaste character of the Tower. The enclosure of the tomb of the late Mr. Beckford having been removed to form an architectural screen, presents in connection with the Tower



LANSDOWN CEMETERY AND BECKFORD'S TOWER.

and porch, a most unique composition. The Cross and emblems of the Trinity, Eternity, Time, &c., are introduced, as well as the monograms of the Rector and architect, and the following inscriptions:—"Extruxit Anno Domini MDCCCXLVIII.." "Till the Heavens be no more they shall not awake," "Watch, therefore, for ye know not the hour your Lord doth come," "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." And over the side doors are inscribed:—"The Gates of Death" and "Resurgent." The principal apartment on the first floor of the Tower has been converted into a chapel, a reading desk being placed at the western end and two rows of pews arranged down the side. Facing the reading desk is the escutcheon of the late Mr. Beckford, with his armorial bearings and motto, "*De Dieu tout.*" The remaining portions of the Tower, deprived of the rich draperies and appointments they were wont to wear, present a sad contrast to their appearance in the days when the author of "*Vathek*" made them his frequent sojourn and delight. The tomb of Mr. Beckford, which was removed from the Abbey Cemetery, is placed on the southern side and at some distance from the Tower, and is beautifully situated in the midst of choice and luxuriant shrubs.

On the day of consecration the principal path leading from the porch to the Tower was lined with children connected with the Brown, Green,

Walcot Parochial and District National Schools ; awaiting the arrival of the Lord Bishop, who was met at the gate by the Duchess of Hamilton, the Rev. the Rector of Walcot, and several other clergymen of the city.

A petition having been presented to his lordship, praying him to consecrate the land for a burial place, and he having signified his consent to the same, a procession was formed consisting of the Bishop, clergy, school children, and visitors, who perambulated the ground to be consecrated, repeating in their course one of the appointed psalms and the other services.

Among the clergy forming the procession was Archdeacon Brymer, Revs. Messrs. Widdrington, Davis, Marsh, Sproule, Wood, Dixon, Strong, Hall, Brodrick, East, Scarth, Lathbury, Tottenham, Woodward, &c. On arriving at the entrance to the Tower the title deed was presented to the Bishop, after which the sentence of consecration was read by the Registrar and signed by his Lordship, who then read the following prayer :—

“ O God, who has taught us in Thy Holy Word that there is a difference between the spirit of a beast that goeth downwards to the earth and the spirit of a man which ascendeth up to God who gave it ; and likewise by the example of Thy holy servants, in all ages, has taught us to assign peculiar places where the bodies of Thy saints may rest in peace, and be preserved from all indignities, whilst their souls are safely kept in



ENTRANCE TO LANSDOWN CEMETERY.

It was on April 25th, 1848, that the Cemetery was consecrated by the Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells. The remains of Mr. Beckford had been deposited at the Abbey Cemetery in 1844, and were removed to Lansdown Cemetery, where the tomb of the deceased now occupies a prominent position.

the hands of their faithful Redeemer ; accept, we beseech Thee, this charitable work of ours in separating this portion of land to that good purpose ; and give us grace, that by the frequent instances of mortality which we behold, we may learn and seriously consider how frail and uncertain our condition here on earth is, and so number our days as to apply our hearts unto wisdom. That in the midst of life thinking upon death, and daily preparing ourselves for the judgment that is to follow, we may have our part in the resurrection to eternal life, with Him who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, and now liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen."

A portion of the 39th Psalm was then sung, and the ceremony was concluded by the Bishop pronouncing the following benediction :—

"The Lord bless us and keep us ; the Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon us, and give us peace now and for evermore. Amen."

CHAPTER XIV.

BECKFORD AND EDGAR ALLEN POE—A
COMPARISON.

ON the summit of Lansdown Hill (says an American author) is to be seen Lansdown Tower, which, half-a-century ago, constituted a kind of microcosm of the life, tastes, and character of its owner. In its internal decorations, as well as by its external appearance, the bent of his mind was to be seen. William Beckford has passed away, and the building which he constructed so that from its topmost pinnacle he might catch an occasional glimpse of the gilded spires of Fonthill, is no longer a receptacle of the living, but is dedicated to the dead. The fantastic edifice called into being by the magic wand of almost countless fortune, is now only a place where the burial service is read; the grounds adjacent, that were once specimens of the most varied horticultural magnificence known at the time, have now no other occupants but those who have done with this life. Beckford's

Tower is the chapel of a cemetery "Where all life dies, death lives."

"In Rome of old they bore their dead
To fields with pleasant verdure spread,
And lay them down to rest.

.
The Egyptian reared his pyramid
To veil with a colossal lid,
The puny dust of man."

Even now the black cloth drapery which envelopes the walls of one of the lower apartments of the building—once a mimic banquetting chamber, at present the vestibule to the tomb—does not conceal all traces of that passion for richness and splendour which has gained for the words, Beckford, "Vathek" and Fonthill an European fame. The hues of the ceiling are somewhat dimmed by age; the peculiarity of the decorative device is yet visible. It is a perfect realisation of the *lagcianta leita* of the Romans—a frilled roof, whose panels are alternately black or the richest crimson. Always averse to the boredom of promiscuously entertaining sight-seers, Beckford guarded his tower on Lansdown against intrusion with exceptional vigilance. It was built as it was fitted up, primarily and solely for his private gratification, he had consulted no other taste than his own, but that was sufficient to ensure for it the perfection of its kind. It is unnecessary here, for our purpose, to go into a detailed description of the building to which we

refer. Let us picture to ourselves one room which may serve, in the first place, as a fair exemplification of Beckford's conception of, and passion for the beautiful; and in the second, a reasonable specimen of the aptness of ornament noticeable in his Lansdown Tower, as in his Abbey at Fonthill. The hangings, carpets, and walls of the apartment in which we are supposed to be standing were all of the richest crimson, the only exception to this prevailing tint was the ceiling, that was crimson interspersed with purple and gold. At one extremity of the room was placed an ebony cabinet, of most exquisite workmanship, the top of which was composed of a single slab of the most precious green porphyry. Tables were ranged at intervals throughout the chamber, manufactured from rare Italian marble; from the ceiling were suspended candelabra of polished granite; on the walls were hanging cabinets containing vases of china, jasper, chalcedony, agate, and cornelian. There were enamelled salvers on every side, by Jean Cousin. There were *chefs d'œuvre* of Murillo, battlepieces by Bourgonone, Italian landscapes by Herman Swaneveld. At another extremity of the room a door led into a closet, with ceiling carved and gilded, whose sides were lined with the rarest and most sumptuously bound books—vellum and gold, with devices in character with their contents, and Morocco binding of all hues; or with cabinets displaying missals and psalters

of imperial value. Remember this is not a room at Fonthill, simply an apartment in Beckford's *sanctum* on Lansdown. It would be an endless work to chronicle the glories that existed in the Abbey in Wiltshire, and the account would seem more like a picture of fair unrealities than a record of what actually existed. Heine has likened this world to the dream-begotten offspring of some begotten god, who falls asleep in a far-off star forgetting that what he thinks he creates. With Beckford to think or to wish was to realise and to have, his mind was for ever running riot amid scenes of more than human beauty ; and he had no sooner mapped out for himself a vision of transcendant splendour, than his wealth enabled him to crystallize it into a living fact. The passion for the beautiful was thus the *keynote of Beckford's existence*.

It is our purpose to show an extraordinary similitude between two men, in many respects of totally opposite temperaments.

Beckford, by activity, temperance, joined with plenty of exercise, rendered himself comparatively hale. He was never idle ; he told a friend in the seventy-sixth year of his age that he never felt a minute's *ennui* in his life.

Poe, on the other hand, was the adopted son of a wealthy merchant (Mr. Allen). His whole life was marked by extravagance and irregularity. He was sent to Charlottesville University, Virginia, but was so incorrigible that he was

expelled from the University. He became not only a drunkard, but a gambler. His poem "The Raven" is one of the most remarkable productions of American poetry. Although his friends prevailed upon him to join a temperance society, whilst staying at Baltimore he became so inebriated that he fell down in the street. On being picked up he was conveyed to a hospital, where he expired on the following day at the early age of forty.

Now for the similitude of the two men—by reference rather to the direction in which their tastes led them to indulge their fancies than to the visible results which they each separately achieved, and it will be seen that the analogy which we have here suggested is borne out in many minute points. The visions of Poe's writings perpetually haunted his brain; that deathless craving after the perfection of beauty which, though it has given him his title-deeds to fame, yet proved the curse of his existence; his conceptions of splendour, his poetic appreciation of the æsthetic accompaniments to luxury, were not a whit less strongly defined than in the case of Beckford. More than this—just as the type of beauty which was ever present to the author of "Vathek" has something distinctly Oriental about it, so too was it with Poe. With each alike the idea of the beautiful ever present to them was purely sensuous. Beckford could carry out his dreams by converting them into realities;

Poe sought to feel their full splendour by the photography of pen and ink, or by means less hallowed.

Poe's love for the gorgeous, for the splendid, the antique, and the rare, is perpetually manifest in his writings; the decorations of his prose and of his poetry are just those with which Beckford filled his Abbey at Fonthill and his house at Bath. Nothing less than "the luxurious violet velvet lining that the lamp lighted gloated o'er" does he deem a fit reposing-place for his hero of "The Raven," only out of "many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore" does he seek "surcease of sorrow" for his lost love. Whether the vein in which he writes be humorous or serious, sombre or gay, there is still the same passion for the uncommon and for the magnificent. Poe's life may be described as a vain groping after his realisation of beauty. The very mottoes which Poe loves to prefix to his tales are written from the pages of some almost extinct poet or half-forgotten divine. These are the scenes amid which he loves to portray his heroes. "Rich draperies in every part of the room trembled to the vibration of low melancholy music, whose origin was not to be discovered. senses were oppressed by mingled and conflicting perfumes, reeking up from strange convolute censers, together with multitudinous flaring and flickering tongues of emerald and violet fire. The rays of the newly-risen sun poured in upon

the whole, through windows formed each of a single pane of crimson-tinted glass. Glancing to and fro in a thousand reflections, from curtains which rolled from their cornices like cataracts of molten silver, the beams of natural glory mingled at length fitfully with the artificial light, and lay weltering in subdued masses upon a carpet of rich liquid-looking cloth of Chili gold."

The Hall of Eblis was indeed the creation of the imagination of Beckford, but it was an imagination of precisely the same kind as that which inspired the American writer to conjure up visions of more than Eastern magnificence. It is a somewhat remarkable fact that neither in his reviews of English authors, nor in those short critical comments printed in the American edition of his works, under the title of *Marginalia*, does Poe refer in any way to "Vathek" or its author. It is strange for two reasons. In the first place, such a writer as Beckford could not have failed, in virtue of the sympathy of genius, to have a marvellous fascination for such a mind as Poe's. His mode of existence, the princely splendour in which he lived, could not but have had a strong hold on the poet who wrote the "Philosophy of Furniture"—an essay which is one of Poe's happiest and most characteristic efforts. In the second place, Beckford reached the zenith of his almost world-wide fame just as Poe was in the midst of his literary career. It is impossible that the gifted American should not

have heard of him whom Byron has called "England's wealthiest son." And that Poe did hear of him, and had made himself tolerably well acquainted with the adoration of the beautiful, which was the great end of Beckford's life, we believe there is internal evidence to show. There is a certain tale of Poe's, not yet reprinted from the four-volume edition of his writings, in which he describes a gorgeous abbey, the original of which may reasonably be supposed to have been Fonthill. "Occupying the whole southern face of the pentagon was the sole window—an immense sheet of unbroken glass from Venice—a single pane, and tinted of a leaden hue, so that the rays of the sun or moon passing through it fell with a ghastly lustre on the objects within." *Apropos* of this passage, which we have quoted from the story above alluded to, "Ligeia," we have these remarks to make in confirmation of the proposition on which we have ventured. Firstly, we do know that there was at Fonthill exactly such a pentagonal chamber as here described. Secondly, Venetian glass was first used by Beckford to any considerable extent in England; it first became fashionable with him. Thirdly, windows composed of a solid pane were amongst the special features at Fonthill. And, fourthly, the idea of the interior objects of a room deriving their tints from the reflection of glass was acted upon by Beckford uniformly at all his houses. There are two other of Poe's

compositions which might be thought to lend their testimony in the same direction—"Landor's Cottage," and the "Domain of Arnheim." The whole interest of the latter of these sketches turns upon precisely that species of gardening which Beckford adopted and introduced both at Fonthill and Lansdown.—The point here raised may not be a very important one, only as we have instituted a kind of comparison it will be interesting to know how far the points of resemblance between the two men may be said to be cases of effect rather than of coincidence, and it certainly seems impossible that Poe, with his passion for reading anything exceptional or striking, should have failed to peruse a work which created as much sensation on both sides of the Atlantic as "*Vathek*;" and if he did, as doubtless he did, peruse it, it seems not less impossible, that he should have been content to have let his knowledge of its extraordinary author end there.

But if Edgar Poe loved to revel in the splendours of the palace, he could gloat over the mysteries of the charnel. His taste was essentially morbid. If he had a passion for beauty he was enamoured also of horror. There were moments when he seemed wholly possessed by the spirit of that Raven which he has described as "a grim, ungainly, ghastly, ominous bird," when his highest pleasure was to torture himself with conceptions of terror and dread, and to

brood over images full of the most recondite and hideous terror. He experiences a morbid enjoyment in chronicling the sensations of the victims of such tortures as the ingenuity of Spanish inquisitors might have devised ; in minutely analyzing the successive symptoms of approaching insanity ; in picturing in vivid colours each particular stage of suffering and dread through which the wretch who has found a living burial passes. Poe, it is said, prided himself on his humour ; but of that humour which bubbles over with kindly jest and sparkles with laughter he knew absolutely nothing. Laugh indeed he does, but the laugh is a hollow one, not pleasant to hear ; beneath the smile may be seen a sneer ; from under the jester's mask peers out the ghastly lineaments of the death's-head. You feel the fun, if fun it can be called, is forced ; and if in one line your mirth is raised by an image drawn from the region of merriment, in the next it is sure to be terror-smitten by a metaphor only kindred to awe. After all, in such a character as Poe's, this is only what we might expect ; it is simply an instance of a reaction which is inevitable. Failing to realize objectively those conceptions of splendid and lustrous, but still sensuous, beauty, he would at times betake himself in simple despair to a fancy created out of an exactly opposite nature. Gold and purple, rich colours, rare combinations of tints, antique books in quaintly characteristic

bindings, classic statuary, priceless paintings—amid these he would have loved to dwell; but the means which fortune gave to Beckford she denied to Poe. Is it wonderful that the mortification of the privation—and in estimating this point we must remember that Edgar Poe lived in a country remarkable above all others for its obtrusive ostentation of wealth—should by sheer force of opposition have caused him to turn to the ghastly and the terrible?

Independently of the exceptional circumstances of Poe's case, it is probable that a supreme and overwhelming passion for the beautiful is in some way or other closely allied with a *penchant* for the ghastly. Thus much at least the writings of Beckford would seem to prove. We have in *Vathek*, it is true, scenes of the most bewitching loveliness, of the softest and most melodious beauty; we have the very acmé of gorgeous magnificence, and voluptuous splendour—an exact realization of scenes such as those amid which the fancy of Poe loved to dwell. But if there are these, there are, too, pictures sketched in very different colours. There may be the softness of Titian; but there are also the terrors of Dante. The descent of the Caliph and Nourishar down the stairs that lead to the Hall of Eblis, their steps insensibly becoming so violently accelerated that they seem at last to fall rather than to walk, with the subsequent scene, illustrates this side of Beckford's genius—

and genius of no common order his undeniably was. "Writing," says one of Beckford's most celebrated critics, "has here done its utmost for imagination. In that gloomy and mysterious place are discovered the countless multitudes, wandering in burning agony, each heart of flame covered with the right hand, their eyes hollow, gleaming phosporically, and sunk like the eyes of those whom fever is gradually sucking up the life-blood; pallor upon the cheek and aridity upon the lip, dreadfully contrasting with the lascivious glances and dancing; the piercing shrieks of pain, and the tables of feasting and rich perfumes; raving madness and despair, with hysterical joy; melancholy with forced mirth; all suspicious of each other and solitary. Then we have the grandeur of external description in the person of Eblis, and the globe of fire for his throne—Eblis thunder-blasted, noble-browed, fair and yet terrible." Such are the characteristics sketched by an able hand of one aspect of Beckford's writing and genius. Do we not here see the germs of that singular vein of fancy which made Poe the author of such tales as "The Masque of the Red Death, or the Cask of Amontillado."

It has been our object here to comment on certain striking points of similarity between the genius and the nature of two equally extraordinary men, rather than to give an exhaustive criticism of either. The comparison may of

course be pushed too far, but up to a certain point the analogy that we have suggested will hold undeniably good. We believe we may even go farther and say that the likeness between Beckford and Poe was so striking that by looking at both, the one becomes more the interpreter of the other than if they are looked at singly. In an essay entitled "The Poetic Principle" usually prefixed to Poe's poems, occurs a passage which further illustrates his intellectual kinship to Beckford that we quote it here. Poe, it is true, is speaking of the poet: let us substitute for that one word the searcher after the beautiful, and the extract might serve as a sign-post to Beckford's theory of the beautiful. "He (the poet) recognises the ambrosia which nourishes his soul in the bright orbs that shine in heaven, in the volutes of the flower, in the waving of the grain-fields, in the slanting of tall eastern trees, in the blue distance of mountains, in the grasping of clouds, in the twinkling of half-hidden brooks, in the gleaming of silver rivers, in the repose of sequestered lakes, in the star-mirroring depths of lonely wells." It would have been interesting to have known what might have been the verdict passed by the author of *Vathek* on this passage.

Prominent features of Poe's nature are especially prominent in his metrical productions; at times he will revel in visions of splendour; at others he is led to dwell on tombs and

epitaphs. But whatever be the nature of his theme there is one thing which can never fail to strike the reader—the essential unreality of the poet. He wrote for effect: his despair does not strike the keynote of true and real sorrow; we listen not to the utterance of a heart's agony; we are rather witnessing the theatrical effect of long-continued study; we are reminded of some structure of exquisitely shaped crystals tinged with a thousand prismatic hues, very beautiful to look at, but which, in spite of their beauty, are formal and hard.

CHAPTER XV.

A CONTEMPORARY TRIBUTE.

THE following tribute to the memory of Mr. Beckford was written a few days after his decease by a gentleman who was privileged to be a confidential friend, and on most intimate terms with him.

“A few particulars respecting this extraordinary man, from one who, during the last five years, had frequent access to him, may not for the present moment be uninteresting.

“For nearly half-a-century Mr. Beckford had withdrawn himself from society, and lived in a state of voluntary seclusion, as complete as that of one of the old hermits in the desert. ‘Solitude,’ says Lamartine, in his account of Lady Hester Stanhope (a woman for whom, by the way, Mr. B. had the greatest reverence), ‘Solitude concentrates and strengthens all the faculties of the mind;—prophets, saints, great men and poets, have wonderfully understood this; and their dispositions naturally incline them to seek for it in deserts, or to isolate themselves in the

midst of their fellow men.' This was the case with Mr. Beckford. Few, with the exception of his own family, and some people of talent, ever approached him; in truth, he was perfectly inaccessible.

"It may well be questioned whether any individual ever united greater knowledge and taste in all the sister arts. Born with mental powers superior to the generality of mankind, these powers were early developed by the fostering care of the first professors in the kingdom:—Mozart was his music-master, Sir W. Chambers instructed him in architecture; and an eminent painter of the day taught him the rudiments of drawing. It will scarcely be believed, that many justly admired airs were originally his composition, and improved on by Mozart and other great composers of the time. I have seen drawings done nearly 70 years ago (sketches from nature of Italian scenery), which for correctness and delicacy would not have been unworthy a regular artist. He designed almost every building and piece of furniture that he possessed. A few years ago an eminent architect showed him a plan of a public building. After the interview, he told me his astonishment at Mr. Beckford's knowledge of the art. 'I should have thought him,' said he, 'a regular architect! when he saw the ground plans, he told me in a moment the intended size of all the apartments.'

"He understood thoroughly Greek, Latin,

French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Arabic; and conversed in many of these languages. His writings in French are so admirable in style and idiom, that *Vathek* was long considered the work of a Frenchman. The episodes of that singular tale excited such curiosity in the mind of Lord Byron, that he offered (though then in Italy) to meet the author half-way, if Mr. Beckford would gratify him with the perusal of the original manuscript. He wrote poetry, in the energetic and nervous manner of Milton; and much of his prose contains the very essence of poetry.

“His collection of pictures contained selections of the works of almost every painter of eminence in all ages; and his judgment, as to the originality of pictures, was that of a regular dealer, and not a mere connoisseur.

“His house was one vast library; and there was scarcely a book that was not full of remarks in his own writing. In conversing with him, it was impossible to mention any work of repute but he knew all about it, and could instantly tell where it was in any part of the house.

“His conversation was full of anecdotes of the great people and distinguished characters that have flourished in the last century. You were startled at stories about Voltaire, Mirabeau, Neckar, Madame de Stael, Egalité, Madame Beauharnais (afterwards Empress Josephine), Gainsborough, West, Reynolds, and others of note, with whom he was in habits of intimacy.

Every thing he uttered, if copied down, would have read well; his writings published were exactly like his conversation.

“Mr. Beckford’s taste in painting was formed from contemplation of the glorious works of the old masters. This correct taste disgusted him with the daring eccentricities of the moderns; but he was not insensible to the genius of many of our living artists. Of late years he had added to his precious collection many of the works of Roberts, Landseer, Etty, Lee, Barker, Cope, Lance, and others; and his death may be considered a loss to living art, for wherever he observed genius he revered it.

“Such was W. Beckford, Esq., whose daughter is a mother in the princely house of Hamilton; and who, before he died, saw his grandson united to the daughter of a sovereign German house, the Princess Mary of Baden; yet, in dress and exterior so plain and unostentatious, that in the streets of this polite city he might have passed for a country farmer.

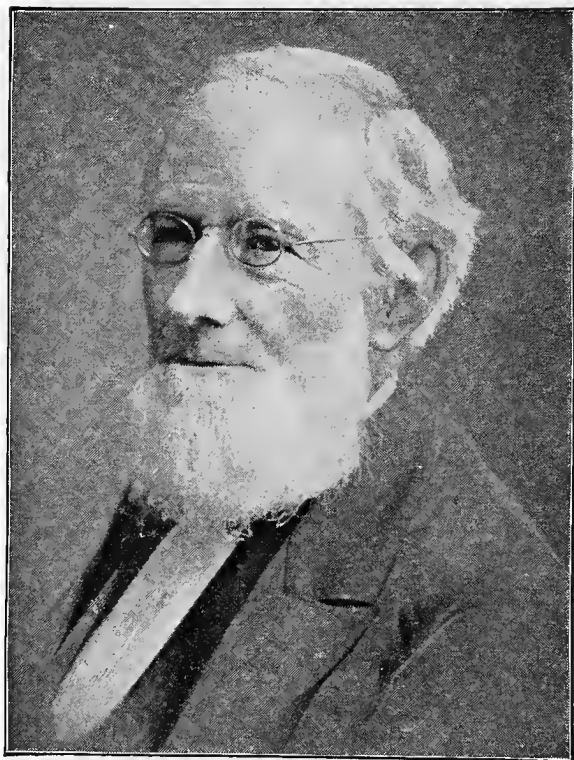
“Many were the private liberalities of this great man, but always administered with refinement and sensibility. The last time I had the pleasure of seeing him, I told him of the necessitous state of a man of genius, whose works I knew he admired. He listened without displeasure to the tale of suffering, and I had soon after the satisfaction of hearing that the appeal had not been made in vain.

“By birth an aristocrat, he was liberal in opinions; and many times have I seen him burst with indignation on hearing of some stretch of arbitrary power which interfered with the happiness of his fellow men.

“But, he is gone—for ever; yet those who knew anything of him, must confess with the author of this imperfect sketch, that

‘He was a man, take him for all in all,
We shall not look upon his like again.’

“Bath, 16th May, 1844.”



SIR ISAAC PITMAN,

Founder of the Phonetic System of Shorthand.

Died in the Royal Crescent, Bath, Jan. 22, 1897;
aged 84 years.

His remains were taken to Woking and cremated, the ashes returned to Bath and placed in an urn to be deposited at the Swedenborgian Church, in Henry Street, near the Great Western Railway Station.

LETTER

From the late Sir Isaac Pitman to the Compiler
(written in phonetic spelling).

14 Mar. 93

Isaac Pitman to Mr Gregory

I hav aksidental kum
upon a Lektur on Beckford in the
Fonetik Jurnal for 1875. I think you
wud like to ad it to your nine Edishon.

It was witten bei mei brother
Benn, who lived in Bath about 1840.

Beckford deid in 1844. The Lektur
was given in Cincinnati in 1874, ^{he now lives} wharf

If you wil ad it to your buk
to folow ^{the} ~~the~~ Lansdown's artikel, I
wil make a fair kopi in komon
speling for the Chronicle, to ~~to~~ folow
the Mirror

When you inepot kum into town
I shal be glad to see you here,
12 R Crescent, & talk over the
subjekt

Farewel

CHAPTER XVI.

BECKFORD, "VATHEK," FONTHILL.

A Lecture by Mr. Ben Pitman, at the School of Design, Cincinnati, U.S., October, 1874.

[Mr. Ben Pitman, who in early life settled in Cincinnati, is a brother of the late Sir Isaac Pitman. Between Sir Isaac and the compiler there existed nearly a life-long intimacy.]

FOUR men have exercised a singular influence in shaping my modes of thought, and determining, to some extent the destiny of my life. Two are among the illustrious living ; two are with the glorified dead. Four men more unlike in their tastes and lives, have scarcely lived in modern times. They are only alike in that they are souls of the finest quality. They are all men whose lives are worth our knowing, and their writings are worth our reading. They are Beckford, Waterton, Ruskin, and Emerson. Only a sort of personal interest justifies one in placing Beckford with the rest. He was of the



WILLIAM GREGORY,
(*The Compiler,*)
Born April 24, 1817.

earth, glorious but transient ; the others are of the heavens, and their lives and teachings are for all time. It is only in Beckford I wish to interest you this morning. As long as I can remember, Beckford and his doings had an absorbing interest for me. Stories of his great wealth, his cultivated taste, the magnificence and grandeur of his surroundings, and the mystical seclusion of his life, lent a charm to this man's existence. Not a boy of my acquaintance but had honest faith in the current belief that Beckford's income was a guinea a minute ! Beckford's residence during the last twenty years of his life, was at Bath. When I was a young man I served a short apprenticeship in the office of an Architect at Bath, Mr. Lewis, who was personally acquainted with Beckford, and occasionally consulted him. Mr. Lewis and the man who made Mr. Beckford's boots were the only two persons I ever knew who actually saw this mysterious personage. Mr. Lewis often told me of Beckford's views of things, of his tastes and eccentricities, or what appeared such to ordinary folk. One instance I now recall, which I remember accepting as evidence of my master's confidence in his art judgment. A Gothic church had just been completed in the neighbourhood of Bath, and which I believe Mr. Lewis had designed. One bright moonlight evening Beckford rode down from Lansdown Hill, his residence, attended as usual by his dwarf, to look

at the new church. When he came within seeing distance he put spurs to his horse, galloped at his utmost speed around the church, and then shot off like an arrow. Mr. Lewis used to laugh at the thought of Beckford racing around that church, followed by his dwarf, perfectly satisfied, perhaps horrified, with half-a-minute's examination of what had taken years to build.

Beckford is known in art, history, and literature, as the builder of Fonthill Abbey, and the Author of *Vathek*. Of lesser note, but of greater interest, as showing the man, are his letters from Italy, Spain, and Portugal, and his "Recollections of his Excursion to the Monasteries of Alkobaka and Batalha." Beckford is unique as an author, and unique in his contempt for authorship. All he did savoured of the marvellous, and showed a wonderful reserve of power. He wrote the Oriental tale of *Vathek* when he was twenty-two, at a single sitting of three days and two nights. It, however, laid him on his back with a fever. It was written in French, and published anonymously, and its idiom was so pure that for some time it was regarded as the work of a Frenchman. His letters from Italy, Spain, and Portugal, in 1780 to 1794, written to relatives, were not published till 1835. They describe Europe under the old *regime*, before the devastations and upsettings of that arch-robber and disturber, Napoleon, and

when, as Beckford puts it, Venice enjoyed her submarine dungeons, France her Bastile, and Spain her Inquisition. I have read *Vathek* many times, and each time with added interest and wonder. It is said to have impressed Byron's youthful fancy; he said he esteemed it more highly than Johnson's *Rasselas*. Christopher North says of *Vathek*, that it is the finest of Oriental romances, as *Lalla Rookh* is the finest of Oriental poems. The American Cyclopædia says, "Beckford published a satirical work against artists." This must refer to a boyish conceit of Beckford's. While yet a youth he used to be much amused with an old house-keeper, who had a habit of edifying visitors with descriptions of the paintings of old Fonthill, mainly drawn from her own fertile imagination. This seems to have suggested to Beckford the idea of compiling and printing a catalogue of supposititious painters, with their histories, equally fanciful and grotesque. This he published at the age of seventeen. It is said that the house-keeper, with her young master's printed guide, "The Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters" in her hand, would descant on the merits of "Og of Basan, and Waterslouch of Amsterdam, their wives and Styles," all of which was received by the country squires and their fair companions in perfect faith.

It is in Beckford's Sketches from Italy that we see most of the man. He was the richest com-

moner in England, with a yearly income of £100,000—equal in purchasing power to about half-a-million dollars of our money—a young man of cultivated taste, acute sensibility, munificence, and genius. The great Earl of Chatham stood sponsor at his baptism, and was adviser in his early studies and training. William Pitt was his companion, Mozart his music teacher, and Voltaire patted him on the head in the way of a blessing. He travelled with a retinue of thirty people, numbers of fine horses, and a string of carriages. His retinue included a cook, an artist, a doctor, musicians and a *savant* to aid him in his literary researches. His wealth and taste gained him admission to any society he desired ; indeed, he was sought by noble and royal folk ; for this reason, his description of the old order of things possesses a unique interest.

Mr. Pitman read extracts from Beckford's works ; one describing a visit to the monastery of Alcobaca, perhaps the greatest ecclesiastical edifice in Portugal, possessing paintings, unique tombs and fountains, where the monks lived in pomp and splendour worthy of ecclesiastical princes. Beckford and his friends were conducted to the kitchen of the monastery by the Abbot in his costume of High Almoner of Portugal, that they might see the preparations that had been made to regale them.

"The kitchen was worthy of a *Vathek* ! Through the centre of the immense and nobly

groined hall, not less than sixty feet in diameter, ran a brisk rivulet of the clearest water, containing every sort and size of the finest river fish. On one side, loads of game and venison were heaped up; on the other vegetables and fruit in endless variety. Beyond a long line of stores, extended a row of ovens, and close to them hillocks of wheaten flour, whiter than snow, rocks of sugar, jars of the purest oil, and pastry in vast abundance; which a numerous tribe of lay brothers, and their attendants, were rolling out, and puffing up in a hundred different shapes, singing all the while as blithely as larks in a corn-field."

Ferguson, in his fine "History of Architecture," says that to Beckford and Ruskin is mainly due the modern revival in Gothic architecture and art. Ruskin teaches because he cannot rest without exposing wrong and falsehood, and telling what he believes to be useful and true. Beckford built purely for sensuous gratification.

He had both taste and means, but was, I imagine, utterly indifferent whether others were benefited or injured thereby. Beckford inherited the estate at Fonthill, which he enclosed with nine miles of high brick wall to keep out intruders. There stood the paternal mansion, which he pulled down to build the magnificent structure known as Fonthill Abbey. It was a vast Gothic pile, more like a monastery or a

cathedral than an Englishman's home, with a tower 280 feet high. "This structure was like a romance. On one occasion, when the tower was pushing its crest toward heaven, an elevated part of it caught fire and was destroyed. The sight was sublime; and we have heard that it was a spectacle which the owner enjoyed with as much composure as if the flames had not been devouring what it would cost a fortune to repair. The building was carried on by him with an energy and enthusiasm of which duller minds can form no conception. At one period every cart and waggon in the district was pressed into the service, though all the agricultural labour of the country stood still. At another, even the Royal works of St. George's Chapel, Windsor, were abandoned, that 460 men might be employed night and day on Fonthill Abbey. These men relieved each other by regular watches; and during the longest and darkest nights of winter the astonished traveller might see the tower rising under their hands, the trowel and torch being associated for that purpose."

During my brief apprenticeship I was never tired of hearing the stories of two of the carpenters who had worked at Fonthill. My first impressions of the architecture and art glories of the place were derived from their descriptions, and I have to-day a vivid recollection of the massiveness of the oak gates which led to the Abbey, the beauty of the joinery, the

intricacy of the ponderous locks, and the strength of the great brass hinges.

Chambers's *Encyclopædia*, from which I read the last extract, says :—"At Fonthill Beckford lived in a style of Oriental luxury and vice." I have reason to believe this to be untrue. Beckford had too much sensibility to be vicious. When he was 76 years of age, he told Cyrus Redding, that he had never known a moment's *ennui* in his life. Later than that he told Mr. Lewis that if he lived till he was a hundred, he had sufficient occupation to keep him busy and happy. He was known again and again to spend many midnight hours, quite alone, in exploring and enjoying the interior of cathedrals and other ghostly places. He died in 1844, when he was 84 years of age, from a severe cold, caught while on a journey to Paris to secure some literary treasures then first offered for sale. These are not the indications of a vicious life.

The seclusion and mystery of Beckford's life, and the capricious and magnificent way in which he indulged his tastes, seem to have misled Byron into the belief that he had built a fairy palace at Cintra, in the neighbourhood of Lisbon. Byron refers to it in the First Canto of *Childe Harold* :—

On sloping mounds, or in the vale beneath,
Are domes, where, whilom Kings did make repair ;
But now the wild flowers round them only
breathe :

Yet ruined splendour still is lingering there,
And yonder towers the Prince's palace fair,
There, thou, too, Vathek ! England's wealthiest
son,

Once formed thy Paradise, as not aware
When wanton wealth her mightiest deeds hath
done,

Meek peace voluptuous lures was ever wont to
shun.

Appleton's Cyclopædia states that Beckford built a fairy palace at Cintra, but I find he did not live there two years ; he may have occupied, but did not build, a palace there.

In 1822 Fonthill was sold, and Beckford came to live in Bath. He had lost two of his estates in Jamaica, on which he had 1,500 slaves. He sold the Abbey and a portion of his paintings, gems of art and furniture, and the residence ; yet a perfect mine of wealth he brought to the house and to the tower he built on Lansdown Hill, Bath. The *London Times* in 1822, when describing the sale at Fonthill, said, " He is fortunate who finds a vacant chair within 20 miles of Fonthill, and the solitude of a private apartment is a luxury which few can hope for ; " —so intense was the desire of the nobility and gentry of England to avail themselves of this chance to see the interior and contents of this fabulous pile. It was after the sale at Fonthill that Beckford lived at Cintra ; he resided there only while his residence at Bath was being com-

pleted. In the *Literary Gazette*, 1822, Hazlitt says:—"Fonthill Abbey, after being enveloped in impenetrable mystery for a length of years, has been unexpectedly thrown open to the vulgar gaze, and has lost none of its reputation for magnificence. . . . Ships of pearl and seas of amber are scarce a fable here,—a nautilus's shell, surmounted with a gold triumph of Neptune, tables of agate, cabinets of ebony and precious stones, painted windows shedding a gaudy crimson light, satin borders, marble floors, cups made from single gems, and lamps of solid gold, Chinese pagodas and Persian tapestry, whatever is far-fetched and dear bought, rich in the materials or rare and difficult in the workmanship."

The Mechanics' Institute Library of this city is rich in possessing the illustrated work on Fonthill, containing coloured steel-plate views of the exterior and interior. The Public Library also possesses an original copy of Beckford's "Sketches from Italy," with a fine steel portrait. Beckford's is a face you will like to look at. He was scarcely above the medium height, slender, but well formed, with features indicating great sensibility, sweetness and power.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONCLUSION.

N concluding the Reminiscences of the Beckford family the compiler will endeavour to “point a moral and adorn *the* tale” by describing under three several aspects the prominent features appertaining to both father and son.

1. *Their Political Proclivities.*—The words placed under the statue of Alderman Beckford, and which may now be seen in the Guildhall, London, testify to the admiration which was called forth from his fellow-citizens, and the gratitude which accompanied it. How very different was the opinion formed of him by his political opponents! We find one satirical poet alluding to what he had addressed to Royal ears as “That senseless speech which Balaam’s ass might own.” The invectives with which he was assailed were both disgraceful and discreditable. He has been represented as a noisy, vulgar flatterer of Lord Chatham—a popular politician affecting a warm sympathy with mobocracy and noisy demagogues; and in a modern history even his pedigree is assailed. Such was the

character given a century ago to a public benefactor by political partisans. As it was in the past so it is now, we have not to go far back in our local history to find fervent politicians assailing each other with equally bitter invectives. The sins of the father are represented as having descended to his off-spring—it is stated that William Beckford, Esq., died unregretted, that his death excited only a short-lived curiosity, and added one more name to the list of selfish misanthropes. During the time Mr. Beckford was M.P. for Hindon and Wells he was in very indifferent health, and when solicited by his old constituency to again represent them he declined by saying, “I should feel happy in again serving my country, but on account of ill-health I cannot.” Both Mr. Beckford and his father belonged to what was then known as the Whig, or popular party in politics. That he had little admiration for George III. may be surmised from the following. In the *Court Magazine* for 1782 is an account of Mr. Beckford joining in a country dance with the daughter of Lord North at St. James on the Queen’s birthday, in 1780; he was then in his 22nd year. “I went to the levée just after Lord George Gordon’s riots had occurred. The military had just fired upon the mob—a necessary step to put a stop to lawless plunder and violence. I entered as the King came out of his closet, the officer who commanded the troop being immediately before me. As soon as the

King saw him he said, ' You peppered them well, I hope—peppered them well—peppered them well!' in his loud way. Everybody looked—the levity of the remark struck the officer. Firing even upon lawless mobs was then considered to be justified only by self-evident necessity. ' I hope your Majesty's troops will always do their duty,' was the answer duly returned, with a gravity which feelings less obtuse than the King's must have felt to be a tacit reproof, as many were killed." His Majesty is said to have declared that he would lay down his crown rather than acknowledge American independence. Mr. Beckford's impression was that this Royal obstinacy not only accelerated war with America, but that the same influence had drawn Pitt into the war with France.

Mr. Beckford appears to have been very jealous of his father's reputation. " What chief magistrate of London, before or since my father, ever gave a single entertainment at the Mansion House which cost ten thousand pounds of his own money?" In this company were forty-nine members of the House of Peers and a large number of the House of Commons, who went in procession to the festival. The Alderman was at Westminster School with Lords Mansfield and Kinnoul. These three were dubbed " The Triumvirate," being the best verse-makers in the school. He acknowledges that his father was a bad speaker, but able to write, and was a

very intrepid man. Feeling indignant at the insult the King had put upon the city by laughing when an address was presented, he determined it should not pass unregarded. The King was as much surprised as angry at the rejoinder. Lord Chatham was too high-minded for George III., who was a man of coarse feelings. High-minded noblemen are not royal favourites. The subjects must not touch the hem of the royal robe. "I have seen," says Beckford, "something of courts, both here and abroad. There must be no competition with regality—all must be prostrate to fatten upon its good things."

Mr. Beckford was perhaps the only living individual who had a recollection of Lords Chatham and Lyttelton as personal acquaintances. Lord Camden, another of his father's friends, survived till 1794. He often spoke with feeling of the kindness these noble lords extended to him in his youth after his father was no more. Lord Camden he called the "Cato of the Bench;" nothing could shake his integrity, He voted for Lord Chatham's celebrated motion in the House of Peers. The King took away the seals from his conscience keeper for this. The Bar behaved most honourably upon the occasion. For some time no one would take the seals. Mr. Yorke, who first accepted the office, was seized with such remorse in consequence that he put an end to his own life before a peerage patent could be got ready for him.

“Walpole,” Beckford says, “hated me. I began Fonthill two or three years before his death. Mischief-making people annoyed him by saying I intended to buy up all his nic-nackery when he was dead. Some things I might have wished to possess—a good deal I would not have taken as a gift. The place was a miserable child’s box—a species of Gothic mouse-trap—a reflection of Walpole’s littleness. I happened to be adding to the Fonthill collection of pictures at the time, and was made a bugbear of. Mrs. Damar and Lord Waldegrave may thank me for their legacy. My having his playthings he could not tolerate, even in idea, so he bequeathed them beyond my reach, as he not improperly surmised. I was thirty-seven when he died—mortals grope in the dark. He built everything upon family honours and gossip—his writings are portraits of himself. He would have abused my heraldic emblazonments at Fonthill. He was full of spleen. He would have written and talked me and my buildings down to the ground. Yet he affected the philosopher.”

2. *Mr. Beckford’s Religious and Mortal Perceptions.*—Of Mr. Beckford the most charitable inference we can draw from what his life has revealed to us may be described in the words of Pope—

“Slave to no sect, he took no private road,

But looked from Nature up to Nature’s God.”

One who knew him well says, “I had many

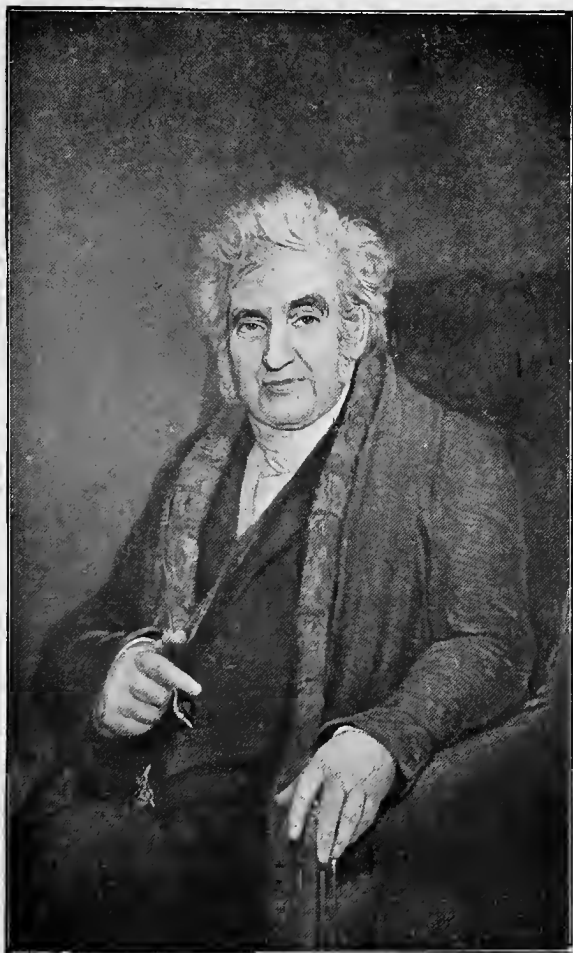
conversations with him upon the subject of religion, for he was rather fond of controversy. I should say he was an orthodox Catholic." That he regularly attended any place of worship we have no record, but that he sometimes was seen in a sanctuary we have local testimony. He used to say, "What are forms? The heart is everything." The Rev. E. Neale in his "Closing Scenes," second series, says, "Beckford told me that Jay of Bath, whom he had gone to hear *incognito* was one of the finest preachers he had ever heard, and shewed me his sermons; and curious enough he had a correspondence with the Rev. William Jay upon the badness of the psalms and hymns used in worship, considered as poetical compositions." "Some," he says, "may consider this a matter of no moment. One of the Popes said it was blasphemous to submit the word of God to the rules of grammatical composition. God should have the best that can be offered in relation to his worship. Church and chapel make sad work of their psalmody."* In the *Bath Herald*, imme-

* About the year 1832, when politics were at fever heat in Bath, Cyrus Redding attended public worship at Argyle Chapel. The Rev. Mr. Jay (who was for 63 years the minister) for the first time in his life introduced politics into a sermon. I wrote a short letter in a Bath paper and reproved it, "I hope not too violently." On the following Sunday he apologised to his congregation for the remarks he had made, and cast blame upon himself in a mode so honest and truly Christian that I almost felt sorry that I had so prominently noticed it; but then I should not have had his virtuous recantation.

diately after Mr. Beckford's decease, appeared the following :—

“ *The Christian Contemplated.*—A series of sermons preached at Argyle Chapel and afterwards published by Mr. Jay was perused with much interest by Mr. Beckford, as appears from his numerous notes written on its leaves, and from which the following is extracted :—‘ This man’s mind is no petty reservoir supplied him by laborious pumpings—it is a clear, transparent spring, flowing so freely as to impress the idea of its being inexhaustible. In many of these pages the stream of eloquence is so full, so rapid, that we are fairly borne down and laid prostrate at the feet of the preacher, whose arguments in these moments appear as if they could not be controverted, and we *must* yield to them. The voice which calls us to look into ourselves and prepare for judgment is too piercing, too powerful, to be resisted ; and we attempt for worldly and sensual considerations to shut our ears in vain.’ Let the reader realize this and connect with it the fact that the book he was perusing was the composition of him who when a boy was employed by Mr. Beckford with his father as a stone mason on the buildings at Fonthill—unconsciously declaring that he was himself a learner from the eloquent piety and wisdom of Mr. Jay.”

Mr. Beckford regrets not having studied astronomy—



REV. WILLIAM JAY,

For 63 years Minister of Argyle Chapel, Bath.

At the age of 14 assisted his father in building Fonthill Abbey.

(From the Painting by Wm. Jay Bolton.)

“Except what everybody knows of the stars I know nothing. I wish I was better acquainted with some of those distant worlds. Ten years younger, and I would have built an observatory on the point of Lansdown towards the Avon, three hundred feet high, furnished it with instruments, and shut myself up till I was master of the science. I am too old now—I must think less of *this* planet—

Le cerf volante dont le ficelle casse,

Tourne en tombant tourne et tombe toujours !
Ours is a miserable atom of creation—we and all our solar system—amidst the many that dot and sparkle along the infinity of space. How much is to be discovered ! How few of these magnificent worlds will glasses ever enable man to see ? What sort of people inhabit them ? Is life there—death—original corruption, which Dr. Whitby wrote so well against ? I lament my ignorance of astronomy—I cannot learn it now—we do not live half long enough to acquire the hornbook of the studies life opens to us.”

3. *An Omnium Gatherum*.—He had great resources for the employment of his time ; he had no time for “dawdling,” as he called it ; he told his friend Redding he never had a moment’s *ennui* in his life. To an acquaintance once made, Mr. Beckford was unreserved, kind, and of a feeling disposition. The most atrocious calumnies were heaped upon him, which he scorned ; for he possessed untameable haughtiness of

spirit. Seldom gloomy, exceedingly sarcastic, sometimes prejudiced but open to conviction, he was admired and feared, to all which his inaccessibility contributed. Yet a more kind-hearted man never lived, *for a spoiled child of fortune*. He gave away large sums, but would not allow his name to appear in the subscription list; if the donor must be mentioned he would have A. B. or C. D.* He refused even to receive thanks. "When I give, I don't exchange the gift for anyone's thanks," he used to say. He was often played upon, but it made no difference to his charity. His servants remained with him from youth to age. His recollection and sight were perfect to the last. He stooped but very slightly after his eightieth year. When he was eighty-three his horse ran away with him; but he contrived to sit firmly, and when he had stopped the animal, coolly said to his man, "Did you ever see anything so well done as that?" Jewels and costly articles of all kinds lay in open drawers about his house, and being told he might be robbed, he replied he knew all

* In one instance where he presented two hundred pounds it was on the sole condition that it should be placed on the subscription list as from A. B. To a young man who showed considerable abilities as a scholar, a total stranger, but who afterwards became a distinguished professor, Mr. Beckford, upon hearing that his father could not afford to send him to a university, presented the necessary means unsolicited. It was seldom he would permit his name to appear in the list of subscriptions to a literary work.

his servants too well to fear that, and as to burglars, "I am in no fear of them. All my servants are great guns in their way, and I am a prodigious large blunderbuss myself." One lot of diamonds he had, *unset*. They lay loose in an ancient *tazza*. These he named his "Cat diamonds," because a relation of his, who kept a number of cats, to which when a boy he pretended to be very partial, bequeathed them to him out of gratitude for his attention to her favourite grimalkins. He abhorred the senseless sport of fox-hunting, and killing tame deer with savage hounds for mere amusement. "Can there be anything more absurd than that men, or rather brutes, should occupy themselves in this cruel manner?" He spoke of Magendie, the celebrated French surgeon, and of surgical experiments with strong reprehension. When his old companion, his favourite spaniel, died, it was buried near the tower, where a marble monument was erected to mark the spot.

He bought Gibbons' Library at Lausanne (about six thousand volumes) to amuse himself when he passed that way. He shut himself up for six weeks from early morning until night, only now and then taking a ride. The people thought him mad. He nearly read himself blind there, and never used the library afterwards, but gave it to his physician, Dr. Schall.

Mr. Beckford wrote, in 1783, a work full of genius and talent, printed in quarto, entitled

“Dreams, waking thoughts, and incidents, in a series of letters from various parts of Europe.” When printed it was suppressed from the absurd fear of his friends that, from its imaginativeness, when he went into Parliament they might think he would not attend to solid business, and his friends persuaded him to destroy the entire edition, which was done. He wrote a short burlesque entitled “A Catalogue of Books to be sold by Maister Thomas Dibdin,” while the bibliomania prevailed. He read all works of moment, but complained of the novels that inundated society as destroying historical truth.

His general temperament seemed cheerful, but was evidently, even in his age, that of one who ran to excess in everything, and was accustomed to have all he desired. Extremely kind in friendship, he was implacable in his resentments; passionate, reserved by nature, proud and impetuous on exciting occasions; to some all gentlemanly and frankness and affability, to others distance and etiquette. In youth he is said to have been remarkable for bashfulness. Hence many opposite descriptions of his bearing are given. He shaped his conduct after the position of the party whom he addressed, having a thorough knowledge of the world. He had a great horror of meanness, particularly in pecuniary matters, and always expressed his feeling on the subject, no matter whom it concerned. He was in consequence plundered by agents enor-

mously. He was willing, though many say not, to oblige strangers with a sight of his buildings and grounds, but was so overcome with applications and letters from all kinds of persons, as well as impertinences, that he ordered his steward to open and return all letters from strangers that he and the steward did not think of moment, giving him any of which the handwriting was identified. A trayful of letters was sometimes taken in from the door in the morning. He never refused permission to see his property when the application came to him through one of whom he had the slightest knowledge. He would not tax his time merely to gratify idle curiosity, and herein was scarcely to be blamed when the extent of that curiosity was so considerable and often so purposeless.

“Be to his faults a little blind,
Be to his virtues ever kind.”

Rather of a slender and delicate, than an athletic frame, he appeared a trifle above the middle-height, dressed in a green coat with cloth-covered buttons, a buff-coloured waistcoat, breeches of the same colour as his coat, and brown-topped boots, the fine cotton stocking appearing just above them. His eyes were small, acute and grey, but expressive; his features indicating great intellectual power. On the whole he appeared much as well-bred gentlemen did of that date. By activity, temperance, and care, more than all by spending as

much time as possible in the open air, with plenty of exercise, he had rendered himself comparatively hale. It must be remembered he did not spend the whole of his time in Bath; he had an establishment in Park Lane, London. In the West End he was better known than in Bath. He might be seen of a morning calling upon a few old friends, entering a bookseller's shop, often visiting Mr. Smith, in Lisle Street, dealing for engravings, etc. After he had entered his eighty-second year he was watched by a friend who saw him riding through Hyde Park, along the Edgware Road as far as the West End, pull up his horse near the rural spot opposite the entrance to what was once his father's villa, and appeared lost in thought—in association, perhaps, with by-gone years. Farther on, half way up the hill to Hampstead, he was more than once observed to stop and gaze over the far-spread landscape beneath at the traces of sunset, perhaps recalling the lines of Dante which he had told his friend he had often quoted on the same occasion in the southern countries of Europe, beginning "*Era gia l'ora*" and concluding with the beautiful reference to the village chimes in Catholic lands,—

Che paja 'l giorno pianger, che si muore.

Mr. Beckford's Fonthill Abbey and Lansdown Tower have now been described, together with his admiration of works of art and his love of nature, his benevolence and humanity, his

eccentricities and peregrinations, his foibles and follies, his moral attributes and reflections, how he lavished fabulous sums of money during his life and died comparatively poor, and yet we find his distribution of wealth did not meet with universal approval, for the Rev. E. Neale asks—

“What hospital did he build, what asylum did he endow? What school did he originate, what sanctuary did he raise? What heathen error did he seek to dissipate, what charity did he munificently support, &c., &c.”

This incongruity in man reminds us of Pascal’s sentiment—

“What a chimera is man! What a confused chaos! What a subject of contradiction! A professed judge of all things, and yet a feeble worm of the earth! The great depository and guardian of truth, and yet a mere huddle of uncertainty! Both the glory and the scandal of the universe.”

MR. BECKFORD’S POETICAL REMAINS

*(Inscribed in the album of the Grand Chartreuse.)**

“To orisons the midnight bell
Had toll’d each silent inmate from his cell;
The hour was come to muse or pray,
Or work mysterious rites that shun the day!
My steps some whispering influence led
Up to yon pine-clad mountain’s gloomy head.

* Written when he was 18 years of age.

Hollow and deep the gust did blow,
And torrents dash into the vales below.

The summit high at length attained,
A moonlight chequered darkness round me
 reign'd,

As fearful to my searching eye
A shadowy form glanced near, then flitted by ;
Anon before my face it stood—
A bearded figure, pale, in pensive mood.

Cold horror thrill'd me till it spoke
And accents faint the charm-held silence
 broke,—

“Lone traveller, ere this region near
Say, did not whisperings strange arrest thine
 ear?

My summons they to bid thee come,
Where sole the friend of Nature loves to roam.

Seven ages past, this drear abode
To solitude I sanctified and God ;

'Twas here, by love of wisdom brought,
Her truest lore, self-knowledge, first I sought :

Devoted here my worldly wealth
To win my chosen sons' immortal health !

Mid these black woods and mountains steep,
Mid the wild horrors of yon desert deep,

Mid yawning caverns, watery dells,
Mid long sequestered aisles and peaceful cells,
No passions fell distract the mind,
To silence, nature, and herself resigned.

In these still mansions who shall bide?
'Tis mine with Heaven's appointment to decide.

But hither I invite not all,
Some want the will to come and some the call—
But all, mark now my parting voice,
Led on by chance, necessity or choice—
(Oh, with our genius fear to sport),
Sage lessons here may learn of high import.
Know silence is the nurse of truth ;—
Know temperance long retards the flight of
youth ;—
Learn hence how penitence and prayer,
Man's fallen race may happier worlds prepare ;—
Show mild demeanour, void of art,
And bear amidst the world the Hermit-heart ;
Farewell ! may Bruno's words prevail,
He said, and sank into the misty vale."

The following is entitled a Prayer :—

" Like the low murmur of the secret stream,
Which through dark alders winds its shaded
way,
My suppliant voice is heard : Oh, do not deem
That in vain toys I throw my life away.
In the recesses of the forest vale,
On the wild mountain, on the verdant sod,
Where the fresh breezes of the morn prevail,
I wander lonely, communing with God.
When the faint sickness of a wounded heart
Creeps in cold shudderings through my sinking
frame
I turn to Thee—that holy peace impart
Which soothes the invokers of Thy awful name.

O all-pervading Spirit—sacred beam !
 Parent of life and light ! Eternal power !
 Grant me, through obvious clouds, one transient
 gleam
 Of Thy bright essence in my dying hour.”

The following striking lines embody some of
 Mr. Beckford's views on Death and the Judgment:

THE LAST DAY.

“DIES IRÆ, DIES ILLA !”

Hark ! heard ye not that deep appalling sound ?
 Tremble !—for to the vex'd, the affrighted ground
 Heaves strong in dread convulsion—streams of
 fire

Burst from the vengeful sky—a voice of ire
 Proclaims : “Ye guilty, wait your final doom :
 No more the silence of the tomb
 Shall screen your crimes, your frailties. Con-
 science reigns,—

Earth needs no other sceptre ;—what remains
 Beyond her fated limits, dare not tell ;—
 Eternal Justice !—Judgment !—Heaven !—Hell !”

On one side of the sarcophagus at Lansdown
 Cemetery is the following inscription :—

WILLIAM BECKFORD,
 (Late of Fonthill, Wilts)
 Died 2nd of May, 1844,
 Aged 84.

With this quotation from *Vathek*—

“Enjoying humbly the most precious gift
 of heaven to man—hope !”

On the other side the same obituary followed by these lines from the above prayer—

“Eternal Power!

Grant me, through obvious clouds, one transient
gleam

Of thy bright essence in my dying hour.”

He told Redding he had attempted to make some verses on his favourite painting, the “St. Catherine of Raphael” (now in the National Gallery), and had failed. He feared he was getting too old to write poetry any more. I observed it was an inspiring theme, and he bade me try it.* He wrote poetry with great excellence, his mind was eminently poetical—he had profound ideas upon the wisdom and goodness of the Supreme Being; these he sometimes mingled with his enjoyments of picturesque nature, his love of which was intense, seeing all with a poet’s eyes—the wilder the more attractive.

THE END.

* Redding did so and sent him the lines, in which he made two emendations.

